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DAILY DEVOTION

ASSISTED and RECOMMENDED,

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FOUR SERMONS;

REPRESENTING

The Principal Instances of the Providence and Goodness of GOD, which every Morning and every Evening offer to our Thoughts; and the Use we should make of them.

By *THOMAS AMORY, D. D.*

The SECOND EDITION, Corrected and Improved;

WITH

FORMS of PRAYER

For the MORNING and EVENING.

L O N D O N:

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[Price One Shilling.]



THE P R E F A C E.

T is a Direction usually given by devotional Writers, to persons who are willing to cultivate an habitual piety, that they should begin, and close every Day with serious meditations, and grateful acknowledgements, of the Presence, Providence, and Goodness of God. The advice is certainly very good ; but none that I have met with, have, in order to make this advice easily practicable by the generality of Christians, been at the pains clearly, and distinctly, to represent the principal of those instances, by which God every Morning and Evening discovers himself to our Reason and Experience, as the God of our lives and the length of our days. To supply this omission is the design of the following Discourses.

As I write for the assistance of the generality of Christians, Readers of a philosophical turn will excuse my confining myself to those instances and proofs which are most obvious, and easily apprehended ; while from *Ray*, *Derham*, the Author of the *Spectacle of Nature*, and the like Writers, they may supply themselves with more curious instances, and without number,

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of the Wisdom and Goodness of our Creator and Preserver ; and with a variety of proofs less open to common observation.

To Readers of this turn, who are desirous of seeing the clearest and strongest proofs of the Presence, Power, and Wisdom of the Deity, continually moving and guiding the dead and unactive matter of the Universe, so as to preserve the frame of the world, and continually produce an infinite variety of beauty and good ; I would particularly recommend a Book intitled *Matho*, as giving to the attentive Reader the grandest views of the Perfections of the Creator and Preserver of the world, and the fullest conviction of his continued Presence and Energy ; and making him in a manner to see that God, *in whom we all live, move, and have our Being.*

On account of the near relation of the Subjects treated in these Discourses, it is hoped the Reader will excuse it, if some thoughts are repeated, where it could not well be avoided ; and favourably accept what is designed to assist him in possessing himself of some of the best pleasures of the present state ; and in preparing himself to enjoy the satisfactions of angels in the approaching state of life and immortality.

Note, In this Second Edition are added Prayers, for the assistance of those, who, properly impressed with the Instances of the Providence and Goodness of God, which every Morning and Evening supply, are desirous to cherish and communicate the Impression, by daily Family Devotion.



S E R M O N I.

Of the principal Instances of the Providence and Goodness of God, which every Morning invites us to observe and acknowledge.

P S A L M III. 5.

I laid me down and slept ; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.

To begin every Day with serious and grateful acknowledgements of the constant Providence and renewed favours of God, hath been always esteemed a principal effect of a religious temper ; and it hath naturally the best influence on the conduct of life, thro' the following Day. Distinctly to apprehend the chief instances of the divine Goodness, and proofs of the divine Providence, which every Morning furnishes, is greatly necessary to render our Morning Praises a reasonable service, and the devout affections proper to attend them warm and lasting. I cannot, therefore, take a better method to excite and assist you to a religious life, than clearly

B repre-

representing to your thoughts some of the most considerable of those effects, by which God manifests himself to our Reason and Experience, as the God of our lives, and ^a *the length of our days*; and this I shall attempt in discoursing on the Text before us. Be you attentive, and may God succeed this representation, for the making you *habitually religious*, or for your injoying, in a greater degree, the satisfactions and advantages of Daily Devotion.

The Text is part of a Psalm of *David*, composed when he fled from his son *Absalom*, in which he lays before God his distress and danger from the number of his enemies, implores the continuance of the divine protection, and acknowledges and rejoices in his past experience of it. The Psalm seems to have been a part of his Morning Devotions, during this time of danger. In the Text he declares such was his confidence in the protection of the Almighty, that altho' surrounded with thousands of enemies, *he laid himself down and slept quietly*, and *awoke in safety*; because the divine power prolonged his life, and guarded him from their attempts.

I shall not confine myself to this particular instance of a favourable Providence, which the pious King had in his eye; but, in further discoursing on the Text, I shall,

I. Represent to you some of the principal, and most obvious instances of a divine Providence and Goodness, which *every Morning* gives us occasion to observe. And,

II. The *practical uses* we ought to make of these, or the duties to which they oblige us. And then close the subject with some proper *Reflections*.

I. I am to represent some of the principal, and most obvious instances of a divine Providence and

^a Deut. xxx. 20.

Goodness, which *every Morning* gives us occasion to observe. Leaving some others to your own observation, I would now desire your particular attention to the following.

i. The constant, regular, and beneficial succession of *Day* and *Night* demonstrates to every considering mind, the unbounded Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, continually exerting themselves; and should lead us to observe and acknowledge them. The great change from *Night* to *Day* is produced by the motion of the Earth round its Center. The Earth, which is thus constantly rolled round, is a heavy lifeless mass, incapable of moving itself; and its bulk twenty-four thousand miles or more in circumference. Almighty then must we confess that hand, which hath for so many thousand years performed this motion in an uniform manner. We are astonished and tremble at the power of God, when we see the lightening forcing asunder a solid oak, or hear of mountains tumbled from their foundations by an earthquake; yet, how little have we been apprehensive of this infinitely greater exertion of power, in rolling round the Earth, so as constantly to produce *Day* and *Night*! And how little have we reverenced the Almighty Creator, for this amazing discovery of his power!

Should any chuse rather to suppose, that the change from *Night* to *Day* is occasioned by the Sun's moving round the Earth; as the bulk of the Sun exceeds that of the Earth near a ^c million of times, and the space it must measure in this circuit would then be infinitely larger than that which the Earth is supposed to measure, how adorable must they own that power which is required to enable the Sun with unabating swiftness to perform this course. The Sun, which in

^b See Derham's Physico. Theol. B. II. C. 2.

^c See Nieuwentyt's Religious Philosopher, Vol. III. Contemplat. 24.

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the sublime language of the royal Poet, is *as a Bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.* His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the beat thereof. How ought we therefore, when we open our eyes to the returning light, to adore the God, whose power thro' immense spaces darts to our eyes the morning rays; and moves the great bodies of the universe, so as in a regular succession may give us the enjoyment of them!

Observe further, how great the wisdom and goodness visible in this appointment; and how extensively, how unchangeably beneficent, the God, who thus exerts his power, for the happiness of his creatures! Was one side of the Earth always exposed to the Sun's rays, the continued light and heat would grow excessive, and destroy all the plants and living creatures upon it; while the other side of the globe, would be lost in perpetual night, and cold, and death. How conspicuous then the wisdom which hath appointed this daily revolution, by means of which the whole world, and the creatures without number which inhabit it, enjoy every where the advantages of the Sun's light and heat! And how great the benevolence of the Almighty, who thus unwearied exerts his power for the good of the animal and rational creation! How should we rejoice, that we are always surrounded by this almighty ever active goodness! And how much ought we to be humbled and ashamed, that we have no more attended to it, and been no more affected with it, tho' thus amazingly discovering itself!

Further, by the succession of *Day* and *Night* God hath directed us to take necessary *rest* and *refreshment* at proper seasons, and disposed every thing around us most favourably for it. Our frame is such, that unin-

* Psal. xix. 5, 6.

errupted

terrupted labours would waste the spirits, destroy the constitution, and render life a burthen ; to prevent which our kind Parent every Day withdraws from us the light of the Sun, and spreads over us the shades of Night ; which naturally put a stop to our labours, and dispose us for that repose and sleep which renew our strength, and qualify us to return with fresh vigour and spirit to the busineſs and injoyments of life.

Add to this, that God hath ſo framed us that we are greatly delighted with novelty, and as much tired with the perpetual appearance of the ſame ſcene ; and by this ſucceſſion the diſgulf is prevented, which our always beholding the ſame ſcene would produce. The ſoothing calmneſs and gloom of Night ſucceed the light, and hurry, and various affairs, and labours of the Day, which had tired and exhausted the ſpirits ; and the next Morning, when the light rouzes us again to life and action, the world puts on again the charm of *novelty*, and delights us much more than it would have done had we without interruption converſed with it. Thus *day unto day uttereth ſpeech, and night unto night ſheweth knowledge* ; of the power, wiſdom, and benignity of the Creator and Preserver of us, and of all things. Whenever therefore the returning light ſalutes our eyes, and awakens us to Reaſon and activity, we ſhould riſe to heaven in grateful and exalted admiration of his unbounded wiſdom, benevolence and power, who cauſes the light again to ſucceed the darkness ; whereas on his ceaſing to act, we ſhould be loſt in eternal Night, never more behold the clearing light of the Morning, nor rejoice in the fresh beauties of the creation ; or in our own renewed ſpirit and vigour, for pursuing the imployments and injoying the pleaſures of life.

2. The continuance of the beauty and order of every part of the creation about us, and the conti-

nuance in life of an infinite variety of creatures, to which we are witnesses every Morning, are glorious demonstrations of the Perfections and Providence of God, and should be observed and acknowledged by us.

It is a gross, tho' too common mistake, to think the world is a great engine, which, once set in motion, would move on regularly for ever, without the constant energy and direction of its Maker. All matter is in its nature dead and unactive, incapable of moving itself, or altering the directions of the motion impressed upon it. Every effect must have a cause, every motion of dead matter a mover, and every new direction of its movements a director of that change: and the infinitely various, great, and regular movements which must be performed, that the beauty and usefulness of the world, and the life and well-being of the creatures upon it may be maintained, require and prove nothing less than the continual exertion of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God.

The Sun is at an astonishing distance from us, computed by the best Astronomers above eighty millions of miles. How great then must we own the power, which darts to us the rays of light this amazing length of way, in about eight minutes, with a swiftness inconceivable, the rays of light in themselves dead matter, and as motionless as the most unwieldy mass of earth! How adorable the wisdom and goodness, which have laid up in the Sun those vast treasures of light and heat, which for several thousand years have supplied the creation, and the innumerable varieties of animals inhabiting it; and with an unabating plenty, still supply them, without the least appearance of a diminution! Should we not esteem it the great excellence of our nature, that

^f See Nieuwentyt, V. I. Derham's Astrol. Theol. B. I. C. 3.
Or the Spectacle of Nature, V. IV. Dial. 1—7.

that we are capable of apprehending, admiring, and loving this most perfect Being? Should we not esteem the light of Reason which discovers him to us, a greater blessing than the light of the Sun? And should it not direct us every Morning with fresh pleasure to acknowledge and adore this almighty, most wise, and benevolent Creator, to rejoice that we are at all times the charge of his Providence, and may hope to be approved, and made compleatly happy by him?

Again, the continued right temperature of the Air for breathing, and for the health of the inhabitants of the earth, requires the power and wisdom of God to preserve it, and we should acknowledge these perfections in it. We know the Air is subject to some mixtures and changes, which render it unfit for breathing, unwholesome, and even pestilential. That its spring therefore is maintained, by which it heaves our lungs, and helps to circulate our blood; that it is preserved pure from contagious and poisonous vapours, and that we, and the world around us, by this means awake to health and joy, not to diseases, sorrows, and death, should be ascribed to the wisdom and mercy of God, whose continued action continues its spring, whose skilful direction of its motions dissipates those vapours, which uniting would be noxious, and prove ** the pestilence that walketh in darkness;* and who, by the gentle breezes of the Morning, revives the whole creation around us, renews our spirits, and increases the pleasure of the returning Day.

Further, the continued life and beauty of the *vegetable creation*, which by the Morning light we discern and enjoy anew, demonstrates the unwearied energy, and ever attentive wisdom and benevolence of the Deity, which should not always be unregarded by us. To maintain the beauty and perfume of

flowers, and the life, verdure, and fertility of plants and trees, an infinite number of particles must be continually raised out of the earth, and conducted thro' the roots and bodies and branches of the several plants and trees, for their growth and nourishment. What less than the wisdom of God is equal to the constantly guiding all these senseless particles to their proper places ? What less than the power of God unwearied moves them all in themselves motionless ! And how great his bounty, who thus provides for our support and entertainment ! And when by the dews and moisture of the Night he hath conveyed the requisite nourishment to the roots, then by the returning warmth of the Sun raises it to the branches and leaves ! When therefore in the Morning we cast our eyes upon our fields or gardens, or walk in them, when we observe the pleasing verdure, and beautious forms and colours of the plants, and trees and flowers, scent the fragrant violet or rose, or taste the delicious fruit ; we should rise in sentiments of gratitude to God who preserves and renews to us these scenes of pleasure, and on the cessation of whose influences all would wither, corrupt, and die.

Finally, the renewed life and action of the *animal creation* rising fresh from sleep should lead our thoughts in devout admiration to that God, who maintains to all these life and action. Were all the animals about us to remain in the inactivity of sleep, or to sink from it into death, how desolate would the world appear, and how destitute should we be of numberless conveniences ! How thankfully then should we own the unwearied Providence of God, which preserves the lives of the brute creation, and their serviceableness to mankind ! How should we rejoice in the fresh measures of life and good they enjoy with the returning Day ; and while the cheerful songs of the birds in the Morning declare the joy they feel in life, and praise their Preserver ; rise on their notes to

the adoration of that unbounded wisdom and goodness, which thus anew diffuse themselves over the world, and anew communicate an immeasurable quantity of life and good! How nobly did the pious King pay this tribute, when he thus address'd the universal Parent.—^b *These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather. Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou bidest thy face, they are troubled; thou taketh away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth.*

3. That in the Morning we are restored to the use of our *Reason*, and of our *Active Powers*, which were suspended during sleep, should raise our souls in wonder and gratitude to God; since that we awake again to *Reason* and *Activity* is because he sustains us.

Did not the commonness take off from the surprize, scarce any thing would appear more really admirable, than the change we undergo when we pass from waking to sleep, and again awake out of sleep. That an active Being should in a few minutes lose the exercise of its active powers, and become motionless as in death; and a reasonable Being lose all command over its thinking powers, which in a minute pass from sober reasonings to the most extravagant imaginations, and inconsistent medleys of ideas; and after continuing hours in this unactive irrational state should in an instant recover its *Reason* and *Activity*: must to every one who thinks of it appear very wonderful. Whence is it that when we have once lost our active powers we do not remain incapable of action? Whence is it that when our thoughts have once got from under our command, and become as extravagant as the waking thoughts of madmen; that we ever recover the command of them again, and become rational agents? What but the wisdom of the Almighty regulates

^b Psal. civ. 27 — 30.

gulates this intermission of Reason and action, for repairing the vigour of the body, and the reasoning powers of a mind united to an animal body ? And what but his kindness, when these purposes are answered by this temporary suspension, restores us again to Reason and activity ? What considerate person, if he could not depend upon God for being restored to these, but must fear in sleep to lose his powers of intelligence and motion ? I must repeat this important, but unheeded truth, nothing but our being accustomed to it can well hinder us from regarding this change from waking to sleep, as one of the most wonderful appearances in nature.

If then to be reasonable and active are great privileges in order to enjoyment and happiness, with what gratitude should we acknowledge God our Preserver, who puts us anew every Morning into possession of these privileges, and causes us to pass from the inaction of death, and the extravagancies of madness, to active vigour, and to that degree of Reason which renders us capable of resembling the Deity ! To fancy we evade the obligation, by saying this is according to *stated laws*, is very weak ; for this is only saying, that God stately confers these blessings upon us, and should therefore be constantly acknowledged and adored for them. Think seriously in what situation you should be for virtue and happiness here and hereafter, if upon rising from sleep you should be as much under the power of ungoverned imagination as in dreams ; and then think how much you are obliged to his goodness ; who when he hath fitted the body anew to obey the mind, restores the mind to its command over the body, and over itself, and to a capacity for knowledge and virtue, and for pursuing with success immortal felicity. How often have we received this benefit, but how seldom, and how faintly apprehended our obligations to our Benefactor ! Let us for the future every Morning when we awake to

Reason

Reason awake to gratitude to the restorer of it, which is but our *reasonable service*; and when we awake to new vigour and activity, resolve to employ these for him¹ *in whom we live and move.*

4. That we are refreshed in sleep, that we awake to *health*, and *safe* from the dangers which surround us in the night season, should excite in us grateful sentiments to God who sustains and protects us.

This *David* seems to have had especially on his thoughts when he made the acknowledgment in the *Text*, that amidst enemies he slept quietly, and awoke in safety under the divine protection. The restless nights we have sometimes past, either wholly sleepless, or in unrefreshing slumbers, by means of a disordered body or an uneasy mind; should, upon reflection, make us more thankful to God, when our sleep is sound and refreshing, and our awaking cheerful. What has once been our uneasy state might always be so, and probably would be so; did not the wise and kind direction of God preserve the right state and regular flow of the blood and spirits. Those frightful dreams, which have sometimes filled our nights with horror, might always haunt us, did not he regulate the workings of the imagination, or restrain the malice of unfriendly spirits.

If therefore our nights are free from pain, our slumbers pleasing, and health continues to smile on us with the returning Morn, with warm gratitude we should acknowledge the goodness of God, who exempts us from evils which better men have endured; witness^k *Job*, who thus feelingly laments his condition.—*Wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, when shall I arise and the night be gone? And I am full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day. When I say, my bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams and terrifiest me with visions.* If the contrary

¹ *Acts xvii. 28.*

^k *Job vii. 4, 13, 14.*

contrary of this description has been generally, or always our lot, and we have not been gratefully sensible of our obligations to God; may we not provoke God by changing our state to teach us the value of a blessing, of which our continued enjoyment, tho' it heightened the obligation, yet rendered us less sensible? If painful nights are at any time appointed to us, let us think how small a portion they bear to the nights of ease we have past, or to those of pain which we have deserved; or to that degree of happiness we may gain by receiving instructions from what we feel, being reclaimed from folly or vice, or excited and formed to a more exact virtue and submission to God, or to a more diligent pursuit of the perfect rest of heaven. Hath a healthful constitution exempted us from nights of pain? And should not our gratitude be fresh every Morning to our Maker, who formed our constitutions thus healthful, who prescribed us those rules of temperance which preserve this sound state, and whose watchful Providence hath fenced off the thousands of accidents against which we could not guard, but which falling on us would have destroyed the good order of our bodies; or who hath furnished us in the world, and in our situation directed us to those remedies, which have restored our health when at any time impaired?

Again, how defenceless as to ourselves our condition in sleep! How many the evils to which we are exposed from the violence of bad men, or from the rage of fires or storms; our being secure from which while we are sleeping we owe to his watchful care, who *never slumbers, nor sleeps,* and who alone *makes us to dwell in safety.* To what ruin from thieves or flames might the carelessness of a servant, or neighbour, or even the undesigning activity of domestick animals expose us? And what but his good Providence secures us from it, who over-rules all human minds,

minds, and directs what we call *Chance*, and *Accident*? Have I therefore for the course of many years laid me down and slept securely, and awoke to health and safety, and to the continued possession of the good things of life? And ought I not to own that God who, when I am unable to take care of myself, and of what is mine, by his real tho' secret Providence protects me? Is the course of things so ordered, that these evils should seldom threaten me, and am I not then obliged to his wisdom and kindness, which appointed this beneficial course? Or does the natural course of things really threaten me with these evils, oftener than I have ever been in sensible danger from them? And am I not indebted to his goodness, who thus kindly over-rules what I call *Time*, and *Chance*, and *Natural Causes*? Do I not continually hear of persons who have suffered by one or other of these causes? And ought I not to be thankful to God, that I am only acquainted with these evils as pieces of news, and awake every Morning refreshed, cheerful, and to uninterrupted health and safety?

5. The continuance of the health, and life and prosperity of our *friends* and *families* should raise our thoughts in grateful admiration every Morning to God, who guards and sustains them and us.

There is never a Night passes, wherein sickness and death do not afflict and lay waste many families, deprive many of friends and valued relations, and fill houses with grief and distress. If we therefore have for many years had our families secured from the stroke of death, and constantly awake unalarmed by its visits, and unlamenting from its violence; we ought surely, with a lively gratitude to acknowledge his mercy, who continues the life and health of many who are dear to us, and whose well-being is of so great importance to ours. When in one Night death seized the "first-born in every *Egyptian* family, while

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the *Israelites* were universally secured from the stroke ; no doubt the lamentations of their neighbours gave an uncommon warmth to their praises of the divine goodness, which thus distinguished them. We are really as much obliged to the divine Mercy every Morning as the *Israelites* were at that time, since it is God who continues the lives of our relations and friends which he can at pleasure take away ; and since his unwearyed action preserves the regularity of every body, and the Reason of every mind.

The good therefore which we constantly receive from the health, and life, and happiness of our friends and families, and the joy we have in them, are the effects of his goodness, who guards them from surrounding evils, and ^{gives to all life and breath and} *all things*. It is our weakness, that when we readily ascribe to the divine Providence and mercy any blessing or deliverance out of the *common way*, and which seems the effect of a *particular interposition* of God in our favour ; we do not think ourselves yet more obliged to God for the much more numerous blessings and advantages, which arise to us out of the stated course of nature and the world. We are as truly obliged to God for every one of these, since his skill and power at first framed this beneficial constitution of things, and his unwearyed kindness exerts these same perfections in maintaining it. If God gave to me at first, and always preserved to me those relations and friends, whose life, and health, and prosperity, in a great measure make my happiness ; I am certainly more indebted to his goodness for the constant preservation of these, than for his remarkably delivering one of them in a particular juncture from an evil which threatened his life. Let us learn therefore to ascribe the blessings we receive from the *stated course of nature*, to the Author of nature, and the Preserver of its stated course ; and every Morning with

with fresh gratitude own his bounty in those satisfactions which we and the friends we tenderly love receive from it. And not to multiply particulars—

6. Finally, that we awake every Morning with abilities and advantages for pursuing successfully *immortal glory and blessedness* should excite in us the warmest gratitude to God, who sustains us in a life thus infinitely improveable.

The chief value of the present life arises from its relation to a following immortality, and in this respect it is infinitely valuable; and the goodness of God, in continuing it with this design, that by improving it aright we may be prepared for everlasting happiness, must be acknowledged as in a manner infinite. “ May “ I by a sober, a righteous, and a godly life, become “ meet for eternal blessedness in heaven, and intitled “ to it ; to a state of immortal youth, beauty, and “ activity, where the noblest pleasures of the present “ life, the pleasures of knowledge, goodness, friend-“ ship, and devotion, are possest in full perfection, “ and where *God hath provided for them that love* “ *him a variety of other joys, such as eye bath not* “ *seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart* “ *of man to conceive* ; and these to be enjoyed not for “ a few years, not for thousands of ages only, but “ for ever ? Is this life a season for securing this hap-“ piness, and the only season ? Have I foolishly and “ ungratefully wasted life hitherto, trifled with the “ offers of this immense felicity, and refused to be “ grateful and obedient to God who designed me for “ it ; and does he yet preserve me in a capacity of “ securing it ? Is my day of grace as well as of life “ renewed ; and does God by prolonging to me “ another Morning my life and Reason prolong to “ me the opportunity for being eternally happy ? “ How great must I confess this benignity ! How “ many have this Night slept the sleep of death ; of

" how many hath God ^p required their souls ; who
 " have been thus removed from all possibility of
 " being blessed for ever, and sunk to an eternal de-
 " spair of it ! Had not I deserved the same treat-
 " ment ? If God had called my soul to his tribunal,
 " what must have been my sentence ? What, but
 " an eternal banishment from heaven and hap-
 " piness ? But his forfeited mercy continues to me
 " an ability of avoiding this dreadful sentence, and of
 " attaining to this inestimable felicity ; how inestim-
 " able this mercy ! And shall I live on insensible to
 " it, and persist to abuse it ? No—Thanks be to
 " God I do not like the ^q rich man lift up my eyes in
 " torment, but I can lift them to heaven with the
 " hope it may yet be my eternal abode ! I will abuse
 " this mercy no longer, lest it be exchanged for a just
 " severity ; I will trifle no longer with the offers of
 " eternal life, least they cease for ever ; I will not
 " waste one Day more, least it should prove my last
 " opportunity for securing heaven, but thankful to
 " God that I may yet live for his favour and for bliss
 " eternal, I will really live to Day by improving it
 " for these noble purposes, and never lose another
 " Day which I can thus improve." Are not these
 sentiments very just and proper for those, whom God
 grants to see the Morning of another Day, and who
 had before wasted every Day ?

And as for those who have not wasted the whole
 of life hitherto, yet with what gratitude should they
 receive the favour of another Day, in which they
 may live for heaven ? " If I have not wholly wasted
 " life, yet I have not lived to so good purpose, as to
 " deserve and claim as matter of right the continuance
 " of the blessing. Have I not many faults to be cor-
 " rected in my temper, before I shall be in a great
 " degree meet for the inheritance of the saints in
 " light ! Are there not many degrees in piety and
 " holiness yet above me, by rising to which I may
 raise

" raise myself higher in the favour of God, and in
" the scale of blessedness for eternity? Have I not
" many opportunities for doing good still in my
" hands, by a diligent improvement of which I may
" lay up treasures in heaven? And am I not then
" greatly obliged to the goodness of God who con-
" tinues these with me, that by improving them
" aright I may enlarge my interest in the joys of im-
" mortality? With gratitude and pleasure therefore
" I welcome the appearance of another Day, which
" calls me anew to the pursuit of glory, honour, and
" immortality. Were my business, hopes, and happi-
" ness confined to the present life, I might then grow
" indifferent to the return of another Morning, after
" I had for some time gone the round of the business
" and pleasures of life, which would be still losing
" their relish, and grow tedious by the frequent repe-
" tition; but when by a more rational and fervent
" piety, a more active virtue and beneficence, I may
" make every Day instrumental to my gaining a de-
" gree of happiness, for value much superior to all
" the separate good and enjoyments of the present
" life, with what grateful emotions should I praise
" the goodness which prolongs to me time so pre-
" cious, and with this design, that by well improv-
" ing it I may prepare myself to receive the promised
" increase of the heavenly reward and happiness?
" Let those therefore complain of life who have no
" hopes beyond it, or who know not how to improve
" it for eternity; I will rejoice in every Day the
" mercy of God adds to my life, till that hour arrive,
" when in the best preparation for the rest of heaven,
" I shall *sleep in Jesus*, that I may awake to glory and
" immortality."

This may suffice for the representation of the prin-
cipal instances of the divine Providence and Goodness
which every Morning calls us to observe. As for the
duties to which these oblige us, I shall treat them in
the next Sermon.



S E R M O N II.

Of the Duties to which the returning instances of the Providence and Goodness of God every Morning oblige us.

P S A L M III. 5.

I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.

IN the preceding Discourse on these words I represented to you the principal instances of the Providence and Goodness of God, which every Morning offers to our thoughts, under the following heads—the constant, regular, and useful succession of Day and Night—the continuance of the beauty and order of the creation, and the continuance in life of an infinite variety of creatures, to which we are every Morning witnesses—the renewal of our Reason and active Powers after the suspension of them in sleep—our being refreshed in sleep, and awaking to health, and safe from the dangers that surround us in the night season—the continuance of the health and life and prosperity of our friends and families — and our awaking every Morning to a capacity of pursuing with success immortal glory and blessedness. According to the method proposed I am now,

II. To

II. To shew you the *practical use* we should make of these returning instances of the Providence and Goodness of God, or the principal *duties* to which they oblige us. I have hinted several of them in the preceding Discourse, and shall now more distinctly and at large consider the following.

1. These constantly returning instances of the divine Providence and Goodness should produce and maintain in our minds a constant humble sense of our intire dependence upon God, and a warm gratitude for our unspeakable and increasing obligations to him.

A grateful dependent temper is evidently the proper temper of those who are continually preserved and supplied by God, and is a practical acknowledgement of the truth of our case. If an alwise and almighty Being continually rolls round the Earth, darts the Sun-beams, causes the clearing light of the Morn to succeed the gloom of Night, restores to us our Reason and active Powers, actuates the vegetable, and is the life of the animal creation ; and if on the ceasing of his influences, darkness and death would overspread all ; certainly it becomes us his reasonable creation humbly to apprehend our intire dependence upon God *in whose hand is our breath and life*, to reverence almighty wisdom and goodness continually exerting themselves around us, and with the most affectionate gratitude and love to think over our obligations to the condescending, unwearied, and ever watchful kindness of our Preserver, who causes the returning light to visit us, and raises us to behold it in health and safety, and who continues us in life, that by rightly improving it we might rise to compleat and everlasting blessedness. Not to be thus affected towards God, when by the returning light he awakens us to Reason and active life, and to injoy numberless effects of his Presence and Goodness, is

in reality to deny, contrary to truth and gratitude, that we are thus dependent upon God, and thus obliged to him ; and must be a temper very displeasing to God in rational Beings, whom he hath made capable of apprehending his Presence and Benevolence and their own obligations to him ; that by thinking of and being suitably affected with these, they might enjoy the noblest satisfactions, the satisfactions of venerating infinite perfection and ever-active goodness, of gratitude to the greatest friend, and of a pleasing confidence in almighty wisdom and ever-diffusive benevolence continually surrounding them ; and might thus also qualify themselves for still larger communications from this infinite ocean of good. Tho' we cannot therefore always actually think of God, yet gratitude and dependence should be our temper, and frequently express in the actions naturally springing from these affections ; should animate and regulate our whole behaviour, and readily appear on every fresh call, and every remarkable renewal of the divine benefits. And more especially,

2. In our beginning every Day with a serious acknowledgement of our intire dependence on God, a grateful recollection of the divine benefits, and earnest supplications of his continued favour, express and cherished in direct addresses of Prayer and Praise to God.

What a noble spirit of Devotion truly worthy of *Paradise* is expressed in the *Morning Hymn*, which *Milton* represents the first Parents of mankind addressing to their Creator ; and how reasonable this gratitude and adoration upon their beholding anew the grand and beautiful creation, actuated and upheld by its Maker ; and upon their enjoying anew the effects of the divine goodness ? I will quote a few lines from it ⁶.

Thefe

⁶ *Paradise lost*, B. 5. l. 153, &c.

These are thy glorious works, Parent of good !
Almighty ! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair. Thyself how wondrous then !
Unspeakable ! Who sitt'st above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works ; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.
Speak ye, who best can tell, ye sons of light,
Angels, for ye behold him, and with songs
And choral symphonies, day without night,
Circle his throne rejoicing ; ye in heav'n :
On earth join all ye creatures to extol
Him first, him last, him midft, and without end !
Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,
If better thou belong not to the dawn,
Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling morn
With thy bright circlet, praise him in thy sphere,
While day arises, that sweet hour of prime.
Thou Sun, of this great world both eye and soul,
Acknowledge him thy greater, sound his praise
In thine eternal course, both when thou climb'st,
And when high noon haft gain'd, and when thou fall'st.

What can be more reasonable than that on our awaking in the Morning to health and Reason, to behold the beauties of the creation, which the hand of God anew presents for our entertainment, and to enjoy anew a variety of blessings supplied by his bounty, and to renew under his conduct our pursuit of glory, honour, and immortality ; what can be more reasonable than in this or the like manner every Morning in *secret* Devotion to address the God, who convinces us of his constant Presence by innumerable fresh effects of his benignity ?

“ I adore the almighty goodness which anew
“ causes the clearing light of the Morning to visit
“ me, which rolls round the sun, and darts his beams,
“ when otherwise they would continue motionless,
“ and cease to visit and warm the earth ; and which
“ preserves the world about me in life and beauty.

" How boundless that power which thus unwearyed
" exerts itself and actuates universal nature ! How
" adorable that wisdom which produces all this beauty
" and good, and preserves them ! And how incon-
" ceivably great that goodness which thus acts con-
" tinually for the good of creatures without number !
" I adore thee as the God of my life and the length
" of my days. I bless thee for my continued health
" and renewed Reason, for the security and repose of
" another Night, and the various blessings amidst
" which I see another Day ; and especially I praise
" thee, that I see it in a capacity of approving myself
" to thee by an obedience to thy will and preparing
" myself for everlasting blessedness. How many
" ways, and how entirely am I thine ! May I live
" sensible of thy right in me and of my unspeakable
" obligations ; may it be the great concern of my
" future life to please thee, and to imitate thy good-
" ness in doing good to mankind ; and may thy fa-
" vor still attend me thro' life, protect and provide
" for me ; cherish in me the principles of the divine
" life, and conduct me on to still higher improve-
" ments in piety and virtue, and to that immortality
" of blessedness which thine unbounded Benignity
" hath provided for thy grateful and obedient chil-
" dren ; to which the Gospel of thy Son directs me,
" and of which thou hast given me, tho' imperfect if
" sincere, thro' his death and resurrection a glorious
" assurance."

Are not such serious and fervent addresses to God every Morning, the proper language of creatures thus dependent and thus obliged ? Are they not necessary to keep alive on our minds a strong and active sense of the divine mercy and of our obligations to it, and a concern to walk worthy of them ? And are they not necessary also to qualify us for the continued fa-
vour and direction of our heavenly Father, and ought we not to make them the employment of every

Morning ? And is not neglecting thus to address God every Morning in effect ungratefully to deny, that we are thus dependent or obliged ; and to say, we *need not*, and *value not* his favours ?

Further, as besides the obligations of every *particular* person, every *family* as such is obliged to God for the continuance of its safety, health, and prosperity, and for various blessings *in common* enjoyed by them ; for the head of it every Morning to acknowledge with his family the goodness of God to them in devout Prayers and Praises, is no more than acting as becomes a family thus obliged, hath the best tendency to impress the thoughtless and insensible with a conviction of their obligations to God, and a concern to behave suitable to them ; and is the '*best way*' to draw down the peculiar blessing of God on a family ; and it will therefore be the imployment of every one strongly apprehensive of what he owes to God in that capacity, and heartily concerned for the prosperity and happiness of those under his care both in time and to eternity. Is not neglecting family Religion in effect to say, that as a family we are not dependent nor obliged to God, and do not need or desire his favour and blessing ? And is not this language the reverse of truth, gratitude, and justice ?

3. If God sustain us in life, and his favours are renewed to us every Morning, we ought chearfully to *live to him*, and in prosecution of those ends for which he maintains us in life.

If we owe the prolonging of our lives, of our capacities for action and enjoyment, and all the good things we possess, to his constant Providence, he hath certainly a right to direct how his own gifts should be employed : and if he unwearied confer upon us so many benefits, guard us by his watchful care, supply us by his over-flowing bounty, and maintain us in life, that by rightly improving it we might live and be happy for ever, gratitude should excite us to

practise whatever is well-pleasing to such a Benefactor, and to rejoice that we can make him any returns which he will accept and reward.

" Do I then really owe the returning light to his
" almighty hand, which turns round the Earth, and
" darts the Sun-beams ? Does his wise goodness after
" the suspension of my Reason and active Powers in
" sleep restore them to me, and give me to see another Day in the possession of health and friends, and
" peace, and plenty and reputation ? And hath he "
" required of me that I do justice, love mercy, and walk
" bumbly with him ; and shall I refuse to fulfil these
" commands ? I cannot exert a power, or injoy a
" good, which I do not continually receive from
" him. And shall I abuse such powers to the injury
" of his creatures, his children, or waste his bounties
" by an intemperate abuse ? I cannot be so foolish, I
" will not be so ungrateful to that God who is ever
" present with me, and convincing me of his Presence
" by his benefits. I will cultivate the rational
" powers he hath given me, and indeavour to im-
" prove in knowledge and goodnes ; I will exert
" the abilities given and preserved to me by him, in
" the best discharge of the duties I owe my family,
" my friends and country ; and I will raise the relish
" of the blessings he supplies me, by the nobler sa-
" tisfactions of gratitude and hope in him, and doing
" good to others. This way I may insure the conti-
" nuance of his protection and favour ; by an oppo-
" site conduct I must necessarily become the object
" of his displeasure and condemnation.

" At what a great expence am I maintained in
" life ? Almighty power is constantly exerted in
" rolling round the Sun to give me light ; the same
" almighty power and equal wisdom are constantly
" exerted to preserve the healthfulness of the air, the
" fertility of the earth, and the beauty of the world
" about me ; nothing les than the continued attention

" of

“ of the divine wisdom directs the regular circulation
“ of my blood, separates the proper juices, and keeps
“ up the order and action of my body, composed often
“ thousand fine parts and springs, and causes the or-
“ derly return of ideas ; and shall I render all this
“ expence of wisdom, power, and goodness a vain
“ expence, by my answering no valuable purpose in
“ living, but giving myself up to idleness, amuse-
“ ment, or low indulgences and pursuits ? No —
“ As I am preserved a reasonable Being, capable of
“ acknowledging and resembling God my Maker and
“ Preserver, I will apply myself to cherish the
“ knowledge and the love of God, and a concern to
“ please him, by resembling him in justice, mercy,
“ truth, and beneficence ; that I may be qualified
“ for his approbation now, and for that more perfect
“ state of happiness for which he designs me. How
“ happy shall I now be, if conscious that I make to
“ this ever present and infinitely good Being the
“ returns he desires, and answer well the end for
“ which he upholds me in life ! But how wretched if
“ I bring on myself the condemnation of habitual in-
“ gratitude, and disobedience, to the God of my life,
“ and of making all the expence of his wisdom,
“ power, and mercy for supplying me a lost expence !
“ Were God removed at a distance, were he uncon-
“ cerned for my welfare, and did he cease to do
“ me good, I might be excused if I grew uncon-
“ cerned to please him ; but when I *live, and*
“ *move, and have my being in him,* I must be inexcu-
“ sably stupid, ungrateful, and guilty, if I live
“ without any concern to please him, and to discharge
“ the duties he hath enjoined me.”

4. Are we constantly preserved by God, and doth every Morning give us numberless proofs of his Presence and Providence ? How should we fear to offend him, *in whose hand is our breath, and life, and whose are all our ways !*

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* Acts xvii. 28.

We can have no rational pretence to be easy in a course of disobedience to God, but either that he does not *observe* our conduct, or is not *able* to punish it ; and the instances without number of the constant Providence of God, which every Morning presents to us, manifest both these pretences to be wholly vain. He who restores the Morning light, must be present all over the world he enlightens ; and he who constantly preserves or restores the activity of our bodies and the Reason of our minds, must certainly *know* whatever passes within our souls, and how we employ the activity of our bodies. *We live, and move, and have our being in him*, and therefore, as the Apostle reasons with the philosophical Athenians, ^x he cannot be far from us, or unacquainted with what we do.

Have I therefore, while forgetful of God, been prevailed upon by mean pleasures, or the temptations of corrupt example, to do what God hath forbidden me ? And because I thought not of him, acted as if he regarded not me ? Have I dishonoured his sacred name by *prophane oaths* and *curse*s, shown a contempt of his majesty and perfections by an *irreverent behaviour* during the worship of God, or have I abused his bounties by *intemperance*, or by *injustice* and *inhumanity* broke in upon the peace and happiness of his creatures, which his continued beneficence proves to be so much his delight ? Have I done this without fear of his displeasure or punishment, and because I saw not him, concluded he saw not me ? Let me by serious consideration remove this stupid insensibility to the divine Presence, of which this Morning gives me a thousand proofs. It is not more certain that *I see the returning light*, than that the God who causes the light to return, and dart upon my eyes, and who preserves my eyes in a condition to discern it, must be present with me, and ^y *see what I do*. It is not more certain,

^x Acts xvii. 27.

^y Psal. xciv. 9.

certain, that after the interruption of sleep I awake to *Reason* and *Activity*, than that the God who *renews* my Reason and active Powers must be present, and see how I use them. He must be wherever he *acts*; and he must know whatever is done by the body or mind, whose order and vigour he preserves. And if he knows what I do, it is too plain he must be displeased with me.

If he preserves my Reason by which I am capacitated gratefully to apprehend his benefits, he must be displeased if I never apply it to its best use, ² to seek after God, thankfully to own his goodness, and adore his perfections. If with so great expence of wisdom he maintains the regularity of my body, and the reasoning powers of my mind, he must be *displeased* with me, when by an intemperate abuse of his bounties I destroy the health of my body, and disturb the Reason of my mind. And if with such expence of goodness he continues the beauty of the creation about me, and the capacities of my fellow men for happiness, he must be displeased, greatly displeased with me, when by indulging to violent and unjust passions, by fraud, unmercifulness and the like, I make those wretched, whom he hath taken so much care to make happy. And if an ever present God be angry with me, what have I not to fear from his anger, as the health of my body and the soundness of my mind depend intirely upon his influence? How easily can he fill my body with pains, and my mind with horrour?

If the continuance of my friends, and of all the blessings that surround me, depend also upon him, how easily can he strip me of friends or wealth, and leave me wretched and abandoned? And if he does not immediately punish those vices, of which I know him to be a *witness* and an *abborrer*, have I not the greatest reason to apprehend, that because I have so much

² *Acts xvii. 27.*

much abused his mercy, he will not *chasten* me, but leave me to ^a fill up the measure of my sins, until become ripe for utter destruction I fall into it ? I will therefore no more forget God. Until I can find a place where God is not, I will not dare to offend him. And until I cease to be dependant upon him for life and all things, I will not venture to affront him, but ^b stand in awe and not sin, esteeming nothing to be of so great importance to my happiness as to be upon good terms with an omnipresent God, the God of my life, and the length of my days. Or am I in some degree concerned to please God, and fearful of offending him ? I will endeavour that my regard to him be constant as his Presence with me ; wherever I am I will fear to sin against him, who can never be *indifferent* to sin or a *stranger* to what I do : and then I shall be able to rejoice in his constant Presence with me, and in the assurance that he will be to me ^c a *sun and a shield, will give me grace and glory, and withhold no good thing while I walk uprightly.* This minds me,

5. Of another duty to which we are obliged by the renewed proofs of the divine Providence and Goodness that we have every Morning, a cheerful trust in God, and joy in his Presence and Goodness always surrounding us.

The God, in whom we exhort the pious and obedient to trust is not a Being *far removed* from our world, or *unconcerned* at what passes in it. His Presence fills and upholds the universe, and the rising Sun, the continued order and beauty of the creation, and the renewed reason, life, and activity of mankind, prove his power, wisdom, and benevolence to be unlimited, and ever active in the world about us. And what good can be too great to be expected from this infinite Being by those, who endeavour to be qualified

^a 1 Thes. ii. 16.

^b Psal. iv. 4.

^c lxxxiv. 11.

lified for his favour? He who thus appears to hold all nature in his hand, must have all good in his disposal, and all evil under his controul. He who *gives to all life, and breath, and all things,* will certainly give his children, his approved and obedient children, every good proper for them. In this manner our blessed Saviour reasons from the common bounty of God in *feeding the fowls of the air, and cloathing the lillies of the field,* to his special concern for the pious and good; and in this reasoning we may safely follow him. For certainly he who by his Sun enlivens the creation, will by the light of his countenance cheer and enliven their souls, who look to him and hope in him. And he who by his common Providence guards mankind, *even the evil and unthankful;* will by his special Providence protect those, who by prayer and well doing put themselves under his care, and endeavour to *keep themselves in his love.* The health of their bodies, the moral soundness and vigour of their souls, their security from dangerous temptations, and their success in the pursuit of all real good, and especially in pursuing the perfection of their minds in piety and virtue, cannot but always be his care, if *in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving they make their requests known unto God.* With the same ease as he enlightens the world every Morning, he can provide for their happiness; and that he will do it, the wisdom and goodness conspicuous in the natural world abundantly prove. He who is wise to appoint the Sun his place and his course, cannot but be equally wise to govern the *moral* world by the best laws; and the best of all laws is, that there shall be *a reward for the righteous,* that God should *have pleasure in them that fear him, and that hope in his mercy,* and make them *blessed who trust in him.* With reason

^a Matt. vi. 25.^c Matt. v. 45.^f Philip. iv. 6.^z Psal. lviii. 11. cxlvii. 11. lxxxiv. 12.

reason therefore may they ^b joy in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of their Salvation.

What joy would overflow the men of the world to be assured of the favour of their Prince, to have a constant access to his presence, and the command of his treasures. But there are very great evils which the power of a Prince cannot keep off, such as sickness, pain, the torment of ungoverned passions, guilty remorse, and the most dreaded of all evils, death. And the most valuable goods are such as their treasures cannot purchase, nor their bounty bestow, health, wisdom, an established virtue, and a calm and steady greatness of mind, superior to the fears or approaches of death. But all those evils just mentioned, and every other evil, are under the direction and controul of God ; and all these, and every other good, are in his gift ; and the sincerely pious are assured by the promise of an unchanging God, ⁱ that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and that he will guide them by his counsel, till he bring them unto glory. ^k Rejoice therefore in the Lord ye righteous, in the Lord who commands the day-spring to know its place, who is ^l the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, and with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of a change.

6. This unwearied ever-active goodness of God, to which every Morning witnesseth, should engage us to imitate him in doing good most extensively.

The glory, majesty, and happiness of God consist not in *idle state*, in disregarding all below him, or making all to serve a private *humour* of his own ; no —— God is the greatest and happiest of beings, because he is the best, ever infinitely communicative of good ; he disdains not to employ his almighty power in

^b Psal. xxxiii. 1. Hab. iii. 18.

ⁱ Rom. viii. 28.

^a Psal. xcvi. 12. Job xxxviii. 12.

^l James i. 17.

in darting the Sun-beams, and enlightening and warming a world of men and animals infinitely below him. *"The eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season. He openeth his hand, they are satisfied with good; but if he bide his face, they are troubled, they die, and return to their dust."* God is infinitely happy in the consciousness of communicating good in infinite quantities continually amongst innumerable creatures, and in making the out-goings of every Morning to rejoice in his bounty. And we can conceive no excellence of nature adorable and amiable like infinite goodness, employing constantly almighty power, and all-comprehensive wisdom, in making an universe happy.

Would we therefore be approved of God, and peculiarly his delight? Let us study to resemble him in an active diffusive benevolence. Would we be happy like God? Let us employ our wisdom, wealth, power, and influence in lightening or removing the evils, supplying the wants, and increasing the virtue and happiness of all about us. It is not in hoarded heaps, in splendid pageantry, in a dreaded and mischievous power, to give joys any way comparable to those that arise from extensive charity and beneficence. If God be the happiest of beings, and if they are happy who resemble him, are approved by him, and conscious to his approbation; then they are happiest who fill every Day with most instances of kindness and generosity, whose hearts overflow with love to their whole kind, who rejoice in all the good and happiness that surround them, far beyond gay idleness, luxury, sensual indulgences, or a sordid selfishness.

When therefore the *Father of lights* and the **Father of mercies* renews to us his kindness in the renewed light and health and reason of every Morning,

* Psal. cxlv. 15. civ. 27. n 2. Cor. i. 3.

ing, and the variety of blessings, in the possession of which he causes us to awake, let us resolve to approve ourselves indeed ^o his *children* by resembling him in goodness, *who maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* If this be our temper, and this our conduct, his countenance will shine on us with most beneficial influences now, and when we awake to the Morning of the ^P resurrection, we shall awake to the fulness of happiness, in a world where all are good and happy, completely and for ever happy. To add no more,

7. Does God renew to us every Morning our *health* and *Reason* that we may live for immortality? We should attend to this as the great business of life, consider how we have complied with the design of God, and resolve for the future diligently to pursue it.

God renews to us every Morning our *Reason* and active *Powers*, not merely that we may pursue wealth, and gratify our sensual passions, much less that we should affront him, and abuse his bounties by uncleanness and excess; but he supports us in life that we may *acquaint ourselves with him*, cherish by fervent prayers and praises a conviction of his Presence and Perfections, a proper gratitude for his favours, a prevailing concern to please him, and a devotedness to his will; that we may conform ourselves to the divine goodness by established habits of justice, kindness, mercy, and truth, that we may correct whatever in our conduct is displeasing to him, wear out of our tempers every passion that would indispose us for a rational and divine felicity, and prepare ourselves in the best manner for residing in his immediate presence, where knowledge, devotion, goodness, friendship, and a thousand other pleasures, suited to reasonable and immortal beings, render the possessors of them perfectly and for ever happy. This is the great design for

for which God causes the Sun every Morning to rise upon us, continues the beauty of the world and the race of mankind; as appears from hence, that when all worthy of this felicity are trained up for it, an end shall be put to this visible world, and Day and Night revolve no more. This is a design indeed worthy of the wisdom and benignity of God, being to accomplish the perfection and eternal happiness of creatures
⁹ made in his image.

" This then undoubtedly is a design worthy all
" my attention and labours—but have I devoted
" them to it? How many Days in which I might
" have lived for heaven and immortality have I lost!
" How many Days worse than lost in vicious prac-
" tices, which unfit me for heaven! At best how
" negligent am I of it! Yet what so important to
" me, what a thousandth part so deserving of my at-
" tention and diligence? And shall I yet trifle?
" Is God thus concerned for my perfection and hap-
" piness to eternity, and shall I be unconcerned?
" Shall the Sun rise and set in vain to me, and the
" almighty wisdom and goodness of God be as to me
" in vain exerted in the preservation of the world?
" No—for the future they shall not. I am asto-
" nished at myself, that capable of living for immor-
" tality I could be content to live to any other
" purpose.

" Thanks be to God who hath given me an-
" other Day, which I may employ in ¹ work-
" ing out my *Salvation*; this and every future
" Day shall be devoted to this work, to learn my
" duty, and to practise it, to cherish an habit of de-
" votion and concern to please God, to discharge in
" the best manner the duties of every relation, fill
" life with the most numerous instances of benefi-
" cence, and ² to cleanse myself from all filthiness of

D

" flesh

“flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
 “Otherwise how dreadful will be my condemnation,
 “if I wholly neglect that design, for the advancement
 “of which God causeth his Sun continually to
 “rise, and renew daily my powers of rational
 “thought and moral action, yea, for the sake of
 “which he caused his own Son to descend from
 “the highest heavens, and become a *Sun of righteousness*
 “to enlighten a world overspread with ignorance
 “and vice, and to direct our steps into the way to life
 “eternal! Surely if God will allow me to devote
 “this Day to his service, and all my following Days,
 “and to hope that he will reward my *work of faith*
 “and *labour of love* with life eternal; I will labour in
 “his work, and “*be steadfast, immovable, always*
 “*abounding therein, for as much as I know that my*
 “*labour in the Lord will not be in vain.*”

This subject would supply us with various important Reflections, I will conclude with mentioning two or three of them.

1. From hence we may learn the *unreasonableness* and *guilt* of irreligion, and habitual forgetfulness of God.

If a Son under the constant care of the best of Parents, who supplied him with every thing he wanted or desired, relieved him under every evil, and with the greatest vigilance endeavoured to prevent every danger; if this Son would be inexcusably stupid and ungrateful, did he never once apprehend and acknowledge his obligations to his Father, never think what he might do to please him, and when a thousand opportunities offered for it neglected them all, and upon every occasion did what he knew, or might easily know was offensive to him; if such a Son would forfeit all the affection and care of his Father, then the habitually irreligious are beyond all excuse ungrateful,

ful, unworthy the continued favour of God, and deserving of his displeasure. For no Parent gives a thousandth part so many proofs of his presence with a child and kindness for him, as God continually gives to the children of men, his creatures, his children.

The Sun, a senseless mass of fire, would never of itself chuse its proper place in the immense spaces of the heavens for enlightening and warming us; nor of itself continually turn round its vast orb, nor from a distance of so many millions of miles send his rays to us every Morning. Our earth, a heavy senseless globe of matter, cannot (without the constant energy of God impelling it) turn round its axle to give Day and Night, or regularly pursue its course through the trackless heavens to bring on the seasons in an useful succession. Our Reason and active Powers would not of themselves return to us every Morning after the suspension of them in sleep, did not God restore them. And for *every single* instance of his presence and kindness that a good Parent gives his Family by wise and kind advice, and by providing for them every thing convenient as their occasions return; God gives us *ten thousand* of his constant presence and care and bounty, in restoring every Morning the light and warmth of the Sun, in restoring to Reason and Activity an infinite number of men, in actuating all the animal and vegetable world about us, and maintaining the healthfulness and beauty of the Creation.

To be much affected with, and admire instances of *human* skill, in making particularly a *sphere* to represent in little a few of the regular motions of the heavenly bodies; yet to live unaffected with the *immense* wisdom, power, and goodness of the God, who fixed the wise laws by which those great bodies are moved, and who continually moves them, must be beyond excuse stupid and unreasonable. And to live insensible to a kindness that is continually conferring bene-

fits upon us, to neglect a grateful acknowledgement of it every Morning, and to act as those who are no way obliged to God, is the height of ingratitude and guilt, must be accordingly regarded and punished by God, and is as foolish as guilty ; depriving us of the most exalted pleasures, which are those of discerning the infinite perfections of our Creator and Preserver in his works, and suitably venerating and acknowledging them. For,

2. How great the *wisdom* and *happiness* of habitual religion, of beginning every day with serious and devout acknowledgements of the Providence and Goodness of God, and of acting throughout the Day under a sense of them !

Can there be a more noble or a more pleasing subject for our thoughts, than a God infinitely wise, powerful, and good, who rolls round unwearied the huge globe of the Sun, and darts his beams to enlighten and cheer various worlds, and innumerable creatures ? To contemplate a Deity whose wisdom is equal to the care and preservation of numberless creatures without over-looking the meanest fly or ant, whose bounty constantly *gives to all life, breath, and all things* ; and who with a mercy unchanged by thousands of provocations continues the human race, that by rightly improving this mortal life, they might be qualified for immortal blessedness—To apprehend strongly our own obligations to God for prolonging our life, health, and reason, and still supplying us with all the blessings which make life agreeable ; to be warmly grateful for these favours, and to think with the greatest pleasure that this God attends to our temper and conduct in order to train us up for immortal blessedness ; that in a way of gratitude and obedience he will grant us every real good, and keep off every real evil—To think we are ingaged in a course of action approved by God, that we make him returns of gratitude and obedience accepted by him, and

and that we are under his guidance seeking successfully glory, honour, and immortality—To warm our hearts with such thoughts as these every Morning, and to act through the Day under the influence of them, what can give equal satisfaction and joy?

To be thus grateful to an infinite friend, to rejoice in his constant presence and favour, and in the hope of an approaching immortality; to raise the conduct of life by a regard to his approbation in what we do, and every enjoyment of life by the superior satisfactions of gratitude and hope in God, and doing good to others, and by the consciousness of thus enlarging our hopes and happiness for eternity; if there be such a thing as wisdom and happiness upon earth, this is to be wise and happy, and this is to be habitually religious. To conclude.

3. Would we rejoice in the goodness of God every Morning? Let us learn to commend ourselves to his care every Night.

The pious king *David* ascribes his security to this; for in the verse before the Text he says, *I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill*; and then he adds, *I laid me down and slept, I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.* It is granted God does guard and sustain great numbers who never implore his protection, nor commend themselves to his mercy; but then such persons cannot depend upon his protection, nor rejoice in the continuance of their lives, as an effect of his special favour; nor are they disposed to celebrate his goodness in the Morning, who have not implored it in the Evening. It is evidently a natural and proper employment of our thoughts, at the conclusion of a Day, to own and praise the benevolence which hath preserved and supplied us throughout it, to beg its pardon for the sins of the Day, and to cast ourselves on its protection, when we are unable to take care of ourselves.

They who are not sensible of their dependence upon God during the Day, nor thankful for his benefits,

are likely to persist in their insensibility, and to begin the next Day as they ended the last, forgetful of God. Whereas they who close the Day with sincere devotion, adoring their gracious Preserver who is the length of their days, can with confidence commend themselves to God amidst the darkness and dangers of the Night ; and when the Morning ray awakens them again to Reason and active life they can regard their safety and lengthened life as given in answer to their prayers, and as an instance of the peculiar favour of God ; and will find themselves disposed to improve life in a manner that will make the whole of it subservient to their eternal bliss,

Let us therefore learn to begin every Day with clear and lively conceptions of the divine Providence and Bounty, and grateful sentiments of our own obligations to it, for our constant preservation and the many good things we enjoy ; and to close every Day with serious reflections on the conduct of God towards us, and our behaviour to him, with grateful praises of his unwearied care and inexhaustible bounty, and earnest supplications for the continuance of his favour. This will have the best influence to excite us to fill up every Day well, and we shall thus thro' life enjoy the happiness which arises from the approbation of God, and a sense of it, and from hopes still brightening and enlarging of a glorious immortality. We shall thus make every Day contribute to augment our glory and bliss for eternity ; and when we are about to sleep in death, shall do it with a joyful assurance, that the God who hath sustained us during this mortal life will cause us, according to his promise, " *to awake with his likeness, to behold his face in righteousness, and to inherit glory and immortality :* in a state where sleep and weariness, where ^x night and darkness are known no more, but where it is one eternal

^w Psal. xvii. 15. ^x Revel. xxi, 4, 5, 23, 25;

eternal Day, perfect life, unwearied activity, uninterrupted pleasure; where the light of God's countenance will shine on us in one perpetual smile, and joys ever new and satisfying, increasing the strength of our nature, and improving our capacities for happiness, will be our portion for ever.

God grant what has been now offered to our thoughts may excite us all to seek this happiness, and prepare us to enjoy it. Amen.





S E R M O N III.

Of the principal Instances of the Providence and Goodness of God, which every Evening offers to our Thoughts.

P S A L M xcii. 2.

— *And thy faithfulness every Night.*

THE heavens, says the royal ^a Poet, declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto Day uttereth speech, and Night unto Night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Persons therefore of every language ought to receive their instruction; and the inhabitants of all the earth, who by the understanding which God has given them are capable of apprehending his perfections discovered in the formation and continual preservation of the universe, and who enjoy so much good, the effect of these perfections, constantly exerted in their favour, ought with all veneration and gratitude to trace and acknow-

^a Psal. xix. 1, 2, 3.

acknowledge this God, who thus perpetually manifests himself to the pious and considerate. Nor is it more their *duty* than it is their *happiness* thus to employ their minds. Since clearly and strongly to discern infinite wisdom, power, and goodness unweariedly exerting themselves all around us, and producing effects worthy these glorious attributes; suitably to venerate and love the infinitely wise and good Father of the universe, with ardent gratitude to own his past favours, to rejoice in a sense of his approbation, in an assurance of his continuing care and bounty, and in the largest hopes from his goodness for eternity; is the most delightful as well as excellent imployment of the rational powers which God has given us. It is indeed, according to the declaration and experience of the pious king ^b *David*, *a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name O most High; to shew forth thy loving kindness in the Morning, and thy faithfulness every Night.*

To excite and assist you thus in the best manner to employ your minds, I have represented the principal instances of the divine Providence and Benignity, which every *Morning* gives us occasion to observe; and from the Text read I design to offer to your thoughts those which every *Evening* calls us to observe and reflect upon, that I may help and ingage you to begin and conclude every Day with God — “ May God “ himself succeed the design, and render what will be “ offered effectual to raise all to an habitual piety; “ that we may enjoy its noble satisfactions through-“ out this life, and be prepared for the eternal re-“ wards promised to it in the life to come; that by “ conversing with God in his works we may be fitted “ to ^c see him as he is, for the devotion and happi-“ ness of angels and of immortality.”

If we consider the Providence of God over the world without a regard to his *Word*, it discovers in a clear and

^b Psal. xcii. 1. ^c Matt. v, 8. 1 John iii. 2.

and convincing manner his unbounded power, wisdom and benevolence ; if with regard to his *Word*, and the declarations and promises he hath made therein, it demonstrates also his truth and faithfulness, by the accomplishment it continually gives to these — It is in this last view that the pious Psalmist considers it, in the Text ; and we may justly suppose him to have had regard to the * promise which God made to *Noab* after the flood, that he *would no more cut off all flesh, and destroy the earth by a flood ; and that while the earth remained, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night should not cease.* He had a view also to the many declarations and promises in Scripture of God's peculiar favour and bounty to the pious and obedient, and to his threatenings against the wicked, who brutishly disregard him ; all which God continually makes good in the course of his administration, and on which he inlarges in this Psalm. I shall treat the subject with a more extensive view, and in the same method as the preceding. And,

I. Represent to you some of the principal instances of the Providence and Goodness of the Deity, which every *Evening* gives us occasion to observe, and calls us to reflect upon and acknowledge.

II. The *practical uses* we should make of these, or the chief duties to which they oblige us. And then add some proper *Reflections*.

I. I am to represent some of the principal instances of the divine Providence and Goodness, which every *Evening* gives us occasion to observe, and calls us to reflect upon and acknowledge. The following deserve your particular attention.

I. The

* Gen. viii. 22. ix. 11.

1. The constant, regular, and useful succession of Night to Day disposes every considerate person to observe and acknowledge the wisdom, power, and benignity of that great Being who first appointed, and still performs this succession.

Omitting here various discoveries of the divine perfections, which I took notice of in the former Discourse, I shall inlarge on several to which the Psalmist leads our thoughts in the Text, or which are peculiar to this part of the Revolution. The rolling the Earth, a huge mass of above twenty-four thousand miles in circumference, round its center, you know occasions this succession. Were one side of it always exposed to the Sun's rays, the excess of heat this would cause, would destroy all the plants and animals upon it, while the other side would be lost in eternal night and cold and death. Great then as the quantity of good enjoyed by all the living creatures upon the earth is the benevolence of that Being, who exerts his almighty power continually to perform this Revolution, without which none of them could live or enjoy good. This succession has gone on for near six thousand years. How immeasurable the quantity of pleasure and good which has been enjoyed by all the creatures inhabiting this globe during this length of years ! And how innumerable the provocations which the unthankful and disobedient race of mankind have offered to God during this period ! How great then his mercy who hath born all these provocations, and throughout so many ages exerted his omnipotence to preserve the world convenient for the life and pleasure of its inhabitants ! And how inconceiveably great his power, which for so long a duration hath unwearied turned round the Earth, and darted the Sun-beams.

When the wise and righteous Governour of the world punished an universal corruption of manners with an universal deluge and destruction, he was pleased

pleased to encourage *Noah* (whom for his singular piety and virtue he preserved with his family amidst the general ruin) with a promise that he would no more in like manner punish mankind, but that *while the earth remained, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, and day and night should not cease.* How unchangeable the truth and mercy of God, who notwithstanding the many provocations, and the great corruption of mankind since, hath for four thousand years fulfilled the gracious promise ! And how securely may the faithful trust in him for the promised resurrection to immortal life and happiness, tho' it should yet be some thousands of years to come ! No succession of ages can make the eternal God forget or falsify his promises, or weaken his power of fulfilling them.

Again, we cannot but observe, that the day-light withdraws gradually, and the Night comes on after the same manner ; we do not pass at once from clear light to absolute darkness, a change our eyes could not well bear, and which would in time spoil them ; of which any one may be convinced by making the experiment, and going at once out of broad day light into total darkness. How visible then the wise goodness of God, who causeth the light to withdraw gradually, by so disposing the Air and Vapours round the Earth, as to produce a * twilight ; which succeeding the Day gradually prepares our eyes for darkness ; and prolonging also our time, gives us particularly amidst the heat of Summer a most agreeable season, either for labour or injoyment !

The kindness and wisdom visible in putting a stop by the Night to that action and labour, which continued without intermission would destroy our frame, in disposing the scene around us so as that we might injoy in the best manner the refreshment of quiet sleep, and that the world might have the charm of

* See Spectacle of Nature, Vol. iv. Dial. 2, &c,

Novelty to please us the more when we return to it, I shall not now enlarge on, because I took notice of them in the former Discourse ; but rather put you in mind of another advantage derived from this succession, of which we are not so sensible as the inhabitants of other countries, over which beasts of prey range. The day-light confines them to their dens, and the ravenous beasts of the forest do not venture forth until it is Night, and man is retired to his rest ; and then ** when the Sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens ; and man goeth forth in safety to his work until the Evening* ; and thus they interfere as little as possible either with his labours or pleasures.

Let us think further, that since total darkness would be greatly inconvenient and uncomfortable, especially throughout the long Winter nights, how provident and how rich his benevolence, who hath prepared the *Moon* by its reflected light to brighten and enliven the darkness ; and how extensive his skill who guides it for this purpose in an unerring course round the Earth ! The pious and grateful king mentions and praises this constitution, as an instance of the unchangeable and everlasting goodness of God, who for so many thousand years has with an unwearied hand guided the *Moon* in its beneficial course. ** O give thanks unto him who made the Moon and Stars to rule by Night, for his mercy indureth for ever !* How pleasing also the prospect of the heavens varied and enlightened by the softer brightness of the *Moon* and *Stars*, how grand, how beautiful ! A beauty more soothing than the glaring splendor of the Day. How benevolent must we confess that God, who presents us this scene for our nightly entertainment ! * And when assisted by *philosophy* we raise the pleasure, considering those hosts of stars, as what they are in reality, so many suns enlightening and clearing innumerable worlds,

** Psal. civ. 20.*

f cxxxvi. 9.

* See Spectator, Vol. viii.

worlds, all filled with proper inhabitants, and all of them the charge of the divine Providence and Bounty, how high must our apprehensions rise of the immense wisdom, power, and goodness, of the universal Creator and Preserver, and of his condescending care and unwearied bounty towards us, who are as nothing before him ! And with what a pleasing rapture of devotion must we repeat the exalted hymn of the royal Poet, *O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth ! Thou hast set thy glory above the heaven. When I consider thy heavens the work of thy fingers, the Moon and the Stars which thou hast ordained ; what is man that thou art mindful of him ; and the son of man that thou visitest him ?* Those Nights also when the absent Moon and clouded sky occasion an univeral comfortless gloom, should raise our sense of his kindness, who hath not made every Night such, but appointed to the Moon its seasons of inlightening and clearing the Earth.

And not to multiply instances, do we not experience something in the solemn gloom of the Evening, and in the fainter light of the Moon and Stars, which disposes us to *serious thought* ; for which the stronger impressions of external objects during the Day, and the various scenes and hurry of the busy world indispose us ? The want of sober thought and serious reflection is one great cause, that the generality miscarry in the pursuit of happiness, are amused and deceived by trifles because present and affecting their senses, and neglect things evidently of infinite importance, the favour of an invisible but ever present God, and the happiness of a certain tho' unseen eternity. Is it not then an instance of the wise goodness of God, by the solemn shades of the Evening to dispose us to that serious considerate temper, which is so necessary to our happiness, which helps us to discern and correct the errors of the Day, establishes and animates our good

good purposes, and carries us on steadily and with delight in the pursuit of immortal happiness ?

To close this head. Could we be raised in Air at a proper distance from the Earth to behold its vast bulk, and its regular, easie, yet swift motion, * its motion round its axis being at the rate of a thousand miles in an hour, and its annual motion round the Sun at the rate of a thousand miles in a minute ; to discern also the Moon in its real bigness, and swift, various, yet regular course round the Earth and Sun, what astonishing conceptions would fill our minds of the immense greatness of his power and wisdom who for so many thousand years hath rolled them on, and unerring guided their revolutions thro' the trackless heavens ! How should we after this sight fear to offend this all powerful Being ! How chearfully trust, and endeavour to please this God, who is thus continually exerting his skill and power for our happiness ! And how warm and exalted would our gratitude be to his benevolence, unweariedly active for the good of mankind, too generally inattentive and ungrateful ! If the sight would with reason thus affect us, should we not by serious contemplations excite these sentiments, since Reason and Experience assure us, that God is thus in reality ever acting for our welfare, tho' in a manner not so obvious to our senses ?

2. The continuance of our *Health*, and *Reason*, and active *Powers* throughout the Day, should at the close of it be reflected on and acknowledged, as an instance of the ever attentive wisdom and kindness of God.

The human body is a nice and complicated engine, the order and action of which cannot be preserved without the continual care and direction of its Maker. To guide the blood thro' ten thousand fine channels in a regular and unwearied course, to separate the proper parts for nourishing the whole body, and lodge them in their places, to send the necessary spirits to swell

* See Matho, V. i. Confer. 4. Sect. 45.

swell the various muscles for infinitely various motions and actions, and to continue that right temperature of the whole, on which health, reason, and enjoyment depend ; what less than the wisdom of God is equal to the performing all this in favour of innumerable men, and how great his benevolence who thus employs his skill and power for our benefit ! How great the blessings of cheerful spirits, active vigour, and unclouded Reason ! How subservient to a fervent devotion, an extensive beneficence, and a delightful discharge of the duties of life ; and how necessary to our relishing external sensible pleasure, which when the body and mind are disordered, lose their relish and power of pleasing !

Hath God continued to me this healthful state of body and mind for many Days and Years with few interruptions, and how greatly am I indebted to his watchful care and unwearied kindness ? Hath he continued it another Day, and have I been thus qualified to enjoy life, to discharge its duties, and taste its pleasures to advantage, and how much am I obliged to his kind Providence ? Have not many who began the Day in full possession of Health and Reason, closed it in sickness, distraction, or death ? Have not many wearisome days of pain and sickness for a long succession ? And might not God have appointed these to be my lot ? Can I say I had improved Health and Reason so well, as to deserve the continuance of them ; or in a better manner than many who are deprived of these favours ? Shall I always live insensible to the mercy of my heavenly Father, who constantly attends to my happiness ? Shall I venture by known disobedience to affront him in whose hand is my breath and life, and on whose withdrawing it I should sink into the dust ? Shall I dare to abuse the vigour he preserves and the gifts he bestows by intemperance, uncleanness, or violence ? Shall I not be concerned to answer the purposes for which he maintains me in life ; and

and chearfully employ that spirit and activity which he preserves in instances of gratitude to him, of beneficence to mankind, and in preparing for that immortality for which he designs me? Is my frame so brittle as to need his perpetual care and direction to preserve it, and shall I trifle away opportunities for securing eternal happiness, presuming my life will be prolonged, yet provoking the God in whose hand it is to cut it short? Is one Day of pain and sickness so heavy an affliction to me? How warm should be my gratitude to God, who hath preserved me from so many to which my frailty and my sins exposed me; who hath given and continued to me a healthful constitution, and who hath granted me to pass another Day chearfully, and to conclude it in ease!

3. The *common protection* of the divine Providence, and *supplies* of the divine Bounty we have injoyed thro' the Day, should in the Evening be reflected on and acknowledged with humility and gratitude.

How many are the accidents fatal to the health or ease or life of man, and how many the daily sufferers by them of which every News Paper gives us an account! The articles of this kind make up near a quarter of our News — Sufferers by the violence, passions, and wickedness of other men, by the rage of mad creatures, or the ungovernable fury of horses and other animals, by the fall of houses, walls, or other heavy bodies, by falls in riding or walking, by boats and vessels overset, and the like—Have I another Day past unhurt thro' so many accidental evils, yea, for many Days and Years, and been acquainted with them only as matter of News? And ought I not gratefully to think of my obligations to his Providence who hath secured me against them? Have I owed my security from some of these to my own prudence and well governed passions, and am I not even here indebted to God, who hath given me this prudence, and whose Gospel and whose Grace have greatly assisted

ed me to avoid the evils attending on ungoverned passions? Do I owe my exemption from more of those evils to the circumstances wherein I am placed, and should I not be thankful to God who hath assigned me a situation more safe and easy? Is it owing to the well ordered constitution of things about me, or to the natural strength and sagacity with which most men are indowèd, that fatal accidents are not more numerous, or that they pass safe thro' those which surround them? And are we not indebted to his wise goodness, who formed and maintains this regular constitution in the world about us; and who indowèd mankind with such strength or sagacity for declining or surmounting the numerous accidental evils to which after all we are liable?

And if besides the accidents to which the common frailty of our make exposes me, I have escaped others to which my own folly or viciousness laid me open, have been kept from breaking my bones, when intemperance had disabled me to take care of myself, or from fatal quarrels and injuries, to which my ungoverned passions had exposed me, ought I not to be doubly thankful to God, who protected me when I most needed his care, but was most *unworthy* of it? In short, when we consider how many the professions are, and how numerous the persons under each, whose sole business it is to guard against the evil accidents to which every Day gives birth, or to relieve those who have been hurt by them, we must see reason to acknowledge the divine care and goodness for every Day, which we conclude safe from the attack of any of these. And when we consider how many the * accidents are against which no human prudence or strength can provide, and which yet may prove fatal to our ease or life, such as the slip of a foot, the starting of a horse, the fall of a tile, and the like, no reasonable person

* Quid quisque vitet, nunquam homini satis
Cautum est in horas. — HORAT. Od. 13. L. 2.

person can think himself safe, until he hath insured the protection of that God, whose wisdom and power controul what we call chance and accident, *without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, and by whom even the hairs of our head are numbered.*

And as the *safety* so the *supplies* of every Day should in the Evening raise our thoughts to God, whose bounty furnishes them. Have I wanted for no good thing another Day? Hath my table been spread, and my cup filled? Is my habitation convenient, and my cloathing warm and decent? All these blessings it is evident I owe to God, who continually produces and maintains the various animals whose flesh supports me, or whose fleeces clothe me, who formed the wheat, the barley, and the vine; whose Earth nourishes all these, whose Clouds water them, and whose Sun raises the proper juices, which swell and form the ears of corn and the clusters of the vine. Do I owe my abundant injoyment of these to the circumstances wherein I was born or educated? And am I not obliged for this favourable situation to the great Father of spirits, who appointed my birth in it; when he might have ordered me to be born to penury and labour? Are these good things in some degree the *fruits* of my own *skill and industry*? And are they not also the *fruits* of the *divine goodness*, who gave me my skill and strength for labour, who preserves these, and who blesses the labours of my hands? It is evident therefore that we ought every Day at our Tables to trace up the streams of good with which we are refreshed to the great fountain from whence they proceed; and at the close of the Day to look back with wonder and gratitude on that bounty, which supplies our numerous returning wants, which hath in the frame of the world made such abundant provision for us, hath furnished us with skill and strength to procure these, or even prevented

our desires and labours ; and which when ¹ *the eyes of all* wait upon it suffers none to be destitute, *but openeth its treasures and satisfieth the desires of every living thing.*

Again, some of the most valuable satisfactions of the Day proceed from the friendship and good qualities of our relations or acquaintance, and even for these our gratitude should ascend to God, who formed them with all their abilities and dispositions to delight and do us good, and whose Providence placed us amidst them. This and every blessing of the Day we receive from God, either *mediately* or *immediately*; and did we every Evening thus trace them up to their source, the pleasures of gratitude to God, and of a cheerful hope and confidence in this immense benignity which surrounds us, and which we experience to be constantly concerned for our happiness, would be found much greater, than what an affluence of external good things, joined with a forgetfulness of God, could yield us.

4. The *occurrences* of the Day wherein the Providence of God hath manifested his love to piety and virtue, or his displeasure against the contrary dispositions, should at the close of the Day be seriously reflected on by us.

The Word of God contains various promises to the pious and righteous, and threatenings against the wicked and those who forget God ; and the *accomplishment* of these in the course of his Providence is a proof of the *faithfulness* of God, which *it is good to shew forth every Night.* Our Author had an eye to these, as appears from the following passages of the Psalm. *O Lord, how great are thy works, and thy thoughts are very deep ! A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this ; when the wicked spring and flourish as the grass, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever. The wicked shall be scattered, but the*

¹ Psalm cxlv. 15, 16.

the righteous shall flourish as the palm-tree ; which works its way thro' the greatest obstructions and oppressions.

Have we therefore observed any instances wherein persons have intangled themselves by lying and fraud, lost the credit they aimed to secure, and by losing their credit suffered more in their worldly interests, than the proposed gain of unrighteousness could countervail ; while in other cases we have seen an honest simplicity and steady integrity securing reputation and riches ? Let us observe the truth of God in the accomplishment of these declarations, ¹ *The lip of truth shall be established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment. The wicked are snared in the works of their own hands, but the just shall come out of trouble. Wisdom bath in her left-hand riches and honour.* Have we seen intemperance or impurity remarkably destroying health, or inflaming the passions, losing a man friends, and ingaging him in quarrels ? Let us observe the course of events fulfilling the warnings of the divine wisdom, ² *Who bath woe ? Who bath sorrow ? Who bath babbling ? Who bath wounds without cause ? Who bath redness of eyes ? They that tarry long at the wine ; which tho' it smiles in the cup, bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. Let not thine heart decline after a strange woman ; for she bath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.* While on the contrary the ³ *wisdom of fearing God, and abstaining from these excesses, is health to the navel, and marrow to the bones. The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

Have we seen persons intangled and ruined by bad company, who before this intimacy promised well ; and others by a good choice of their acquaintance

¹ Prov. xii. 13, 19. iii. 16. Psalm ix. 16.

² Prov. xxiii. 29—32. vii. 25—27. ³ Prov. iii. 8, 17.

continually improving in wisdom, goodness, and reputation? Let us acknowledge the faithfulness of God fulfilling the declaration, ^o *He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed.* Or have we observed the generous and charitable to succeed remarkably, and the Fordidly avaricious as remarkably failing of the wealth to which they sacrificed every thing? Let us own a faithful God verifying the declaration, ^p *He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty.*

It would be endless to attempt enumerating every instance, these hints are sufficient for guiding the thoughts to such reflections on the faithfulness of God, as are not only good ^q *to shew us that the Lord is upright,* but to teach us the true wisdom of attending to the warnings of the divine wisdom, and adhering to its counsels; and of not being seduced by any flattering appearances of pleasure or interest into the crooked paths of vice, unrighteousness, impiety and destruction.

5. Peculiar guidance, assistance, or success in affairs temporal or spiritual, during the Day, are instances of the goodness and faithfulness of God, proper to be reflected upon, and acknowledged in the Evening.

The favourable influences of God on the human mind, tho' in their nature *secret*, are yet *real*; and certainly to be inferred from the benignity of our Maker, from our need of them, and from the many express declarations and promises of his Word. And they are not always so secret, but the pious and considerate may sometimes distinguish them; or from their effects with a good degree of certainty discern them. It is a counsel of the divine wisdom with a great promise annexed to him that observes it, ^r *Trust in*

^o Prov. xiii. 20. ^p xix. 17. xi. 24. ^q Psal. xcii. 15.

^r Prov. iii. 5, 6.

in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding ; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Have we complied with the advice, and in consequence of it in an important and dubious affair had those hints and observations strongly presented to our minds, which pursued have guided us to a happy issue ? We are to acknowledge herein the goodness and faithfulness of God. And even supposing *extraordinary influences* have not been always granted us, in affairs wherein we have remarkably succeeded ; yet as the prudence and moral abilities we are possess of, and the instructions of the Scripture, are originally from God, we have a just foundation for gratefully ascribing our success to him.

Have I in a difficult and important trial approved myself to God, preserved a calmness and meekness of spirit amidst strong provocations, or a steady integrity amidst tempting opportunities for unrighteous gain, or an unfulfilled purity when surrounded by the most soothing attractives of unlawful pleasure ? Did the great rules and encouragements of Religion offer themselves strongly to my mind, when I most needed their aid ; and unable me thus to preserve the freedom, peace, and purity of my mind, and brighten my hopes of the divine approbation ? Let me thankfully acknowledge the truth and grace of God fulfilling the promise, that if *we work out our own salvation, he will work in us to will and to do : that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and his strength appear the more illustrious in our weakness.* Have my diligence and integrity been remarkably prospered, and have they, whose opposition I apprehended, rather forwarded me ? Let me praise a God of truth who fulfills the promise ; that *his blessing is in the house of the righteous ; and that when a man's ways please*

the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Were this a proper place to relate at large particular histories of private life, I could mention several, wherein the divine guidance and blessing have been distinguishable in rewarding piety and integrity ; as distinguishable as in the Scripture histories, of God's guiding the " *Servant of Abram*, restraining by *Abigail* the rash fury of *David*, or saving *Mordecai* and the *Jewish* Nation from utter destruction by occasionally reading an account of his services to the *King of Persia*, one night when he could not sleep. But it is more proper to leave you from your own reading, experience, or observation to furnish yourselves with instances of this sort. Let me however observe for the satisfaction of the most *rational*, that it is as agreeable to *Reason* as to *Piety* that we ascribe our success to God ; that even where no uncommon influences on the mind are supposed, yet as the nature and course of things, from which they would derive these advantages, were *originally appointed*, and are still *maintained* by God ; as our own *skill* and *abilities*, *natural good inclinations*, and even our *acquired excellencies*, are in a great degree *his gifts* ; so by just consequence, it is as rational as it is good, at the close of every Day, to ascribe the blessings we have enjoyed in it to God, " *from whom cometh down every good, and every perfect gift* ; who *prospereth the labour of our hands*, and the counsels of our minds ; and *buildeth up the house*, and that without him *they would labour in vain*, who strove to raise it.

6. Any remarkable deliverances from evil we have been favoured with in the Day, should be reflected on and acknowledged with peculiar gratitude, as instances of the kind and faithful Providence of God.

Con-

^a Gen. xxiv. 1 Sam. xxv. Est. vi.

^w James i. 17. Psal. xc. 17. cxxvii. 1.

Considering the frailty of our make, and the many accidental evils amidst which we are conversant, it is highly probable ; that thro' the care of the divine Providence we escape every Day unseen evils, and dangers which we never apprehended. If God * *keep our foot from falling*, the preservation is as real, and the obligation at least as great ; as if when we fell, *he kept all our bones that not one of them was broken*. We should therefore at the close of the Day gratefully own the tender care of our heavenly Father, if we have been kept even from the *appearance* of danger. But it often happens that God permits us to see our danger, that we may be the more affected with our obligations to his watchful Providence ; and in this case we should comply with his design, and with a warmth of gratitude own our obligation. Have we been remarkably turned off from an acquaintance or commerce with persons, where it might have been fatal either to our reputation, virtue, or prosperity ? Have the good offices or seasonable visit of a friend relieved us from great uneasiness of mind, or great external distress ? Have we narrowly escaped the fall of a stone, the blow of an enraged enemy, or the stroke of a furious beast ; when perhaps there has not been an inch between us and death ? Has a judicious prescription restored our health, and prevented the death we feared ? We ought at the close of the Day with gratitude to ascribe these blessings to God, who formed all human minds with all their abilities and inclinations to do good, and who overrules them, and restrains their wrath ; who directs what we call *chance*, and from whom the efficacy of medicines is derived, and who hath situated us so happily for injoying these reliefs and deliverances.

There can hardly any evil be mentioned from which God may not deliver us, merely by favourably influencing our minds or the minds of others.

These

* Psal. cxvi. 8. xxxiv. 20.

These influences are generally *secret*, but sometimes evidently to be distinguished. Let me mention an instance or two.¹ Dr. *Sancroft*, afterwards *Archbishop*, coming into an Inn in cold weather, while they were preparing his room, seated himself in the corner by the kitchen fire; he had sat but a little while, when he felt a strong impulse on his mind that he must quit his place, and he had no sooner left it, but the chimney fell in, and would have killed him but for that secret warning. A Minister, Mr. *Flavel* as I remember, was by an uncommon impression on his mind determined at a late hour to visit one of his hearers, whom he found in the utmost horrour of mind, and just about to destroy himself; which his visit and his conversation with him prevented. In these instances the divine interposition was *distinguishable*; we may be in *reality* as much obliged to it where it is not; and ought therefore to use our Reason in tracing up the deliverances of the Day to the goodness of our great Preserver, and conclude it with a warm acknowledgment of our obligations.

7. We should observe and own the wisdom and kindness of God even in the *afflictions* and *disappointments* of the Day.

Have I been crossed in the eager pursuit of wealth? And did I not need this check, to convince me of my folly in seeking a worldly happiness with ardour and unwearyed industry; while I foolishly neglected to seek true satisfaction where it is certainly to be found, in the improvement of my mind, and the favour of God, and the well founded hopes of immortality; and where if I honestly and industriously sought it I was sure not to be disappointed? Have my health and ease been interrupted by pain and sickness? And did I not need this discipline to cure my extream fondness for the world, and for sensual good; to convince me thoroughly that I was *mortal*,

¹ See Dr. Moore's Life p. 129.

and that my great concern was to please God that I might be happy for ever, and to quicken me in this great work? Is it not fitted to ² produce these fruits of righteousness, and if it produce them, will not the dispensation be a proof of the wise love of my heavenly Father, and deserve to be acknowledged with a peculiar gratitude? Have I been ill used, where I expected and deserved quite different treatment? Might not God wisely permit this to teach me the true wisdom, of expecting the main of my happiness from him and from myself; and with regard to others, to esteem it my great concern to do them all the good I can, and their concern, not mine, what returns they make me; for then the reflections of a good conscience, and the certain approbation and rewards of God attending this steady goodness of disposition, would make me happy now and for ever? Has the ungoverned anger of others given me great uneasiness? And does not God wisely permit it, to make me more sensible of the evil of this vice in myself; since I cannot but reflect, that violent anger is equally unbecoming, equally offensive, and perhaps more mischievous in me, than in the person who hath occasioned me this uneasiness? If we did thus reflect upon, and thus improve the disagreeable occurrences of the Day, we might change them into blessings; and if God hath qualified us thus to alter their nature, and to make an advantage of what is most disagreeable, and directs such events with a design that we might thus improve them; we are greatly indebted to his wise goodness, and should in the Evening thankfully own it.

8. The advantages and opportunities we have had another Day for improving in piety and virtue, and successfully prosecuting immortal blessedness, should be observed and owned as instances of the divine benignity.

The

² Heb. xii. 11.

The generality are *most obliged* to God every Day, where they *least apprehend* the obligation. If Life be improveable for the acquisition of divine and eternal felicity, it is chiefly to be valued in its relation to eternity ; and it is in this respect infinitely valuable. But the generality, tho' God give to them Day after Day thus improveable, neither regard nor improve Life for this noble purpose, and consequently are insensible how much they owe on this account to the divine mercy ; tho' in reality their insensibleness and waste of life heighten their obligations, demonstrating the infinite patience of God : who prolongs their capacity for this eternal happiness, of which their ingratitude and continued neglect have rendered them utterly unworthy. While Reason and Life continue, we may all do that work of God which he will eternally reward ; all acquire and improve in that temper, which will prepare us to enjoy for ever the happiness of angels and of God's heavenly kingdom.

With a design that I should thus improve my time, God hath maintained another Day the regular flow of my blood and spirits, and the rational powers of my mind ; when he might have stopped their course, and have deprived me of that Reason or Life I would not improve. Perhaps I had wasted all my former Days, how great then his mercy in granting me another Day, * *a time to repent*, and in continuing with me peculiar advantages for becoming wise and good and happy ! How great indeed this mercy, and how deserving of a better return than I have made to it ; who perhaps have added this Day also to the many I have lost, or worse than lost, spent in indulging those passions, or contracting those ill habits, which unfit me for answering here the great end of my creation, and for being happy hereafter ! Was God so good after my numerous provocations as to continue my life another Day, that I might yet live for eternity ?

* Rev. ii. 21.

eternity ? I adore his mercy, I am overcome by it, I will comply with his design, and live for immortality, nor ever lose another Day.

Or supposing I have lived piously and obediently, yet as I may grow much better, and in proportion to my present improvements in every good quality, I shall be ranked in glory and happiness for ever ; I am greatly indebted to God for every Day he adds to my life, of which I may make such advantage. Have I had it in my power another Day, and been favourably situated for this purpose, to grow in the knowledge and love of God and of Jesus, to render my faith more firm, my regards to them more constant, and my devotedness to the will of God more intire ? And how much do I owe to his goodness, who hath thus put it into my power to injoy nobler satisfactions at present than the whole world can yield me ; and to improve in that temper which will prepare me to ^b see God as he is, procure me near access to his throne in heaven, and to the presence of the Redeemer, the injoymant of brighter and larger views of the perfections and works of God, and consequently for eternity, the happiness of a more exalted devotion ?

Or have I had peculiar advantages for improving in that goodness of disposition, that love to mankind, which constitutes me most like unto God ; and for practising those instances of charity and beneficence which will be ^c recompenced with the smiles of God and the riches of heaven ? How great this favour, since I am assured ^d that whatsoever a man soweth that shall be also reap ; and that he who soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully ! Or am I as yet greatly defective in the command over my passions ? Is an angry, a sensual, or a covetous disposition yet too strong in me ; and am I greatly defective in that meekness, purity, or benevolence of temper, which are necessary clearly

to

^b Matt. v. 8. 1 John iii. 2.

^c Luke xiv. 14.

^d Gal. vi. 7. 2 Cor. ix. 6.

to ascertain my interest in the favour of God, and to put me into a good preparation for the joys of perfect holiness and perfect charity and friendship ? What thanks are due to God who hath given me another Day, that I might *cleanse myself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, thus enjoy myself in a better manner here, prepare for a death more full of peace and hope, and for *a more abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* ! Whether I have made this good use of the Day or not, it was in reality capable of being thus employed ; of so great value therefore was it in itself, and answerably great my obligation to the God of my life.

Did we accustom ourselves to look upon life and time in this light, as the opportunity for securing everlasting happiness, or enlarging our interest in it, we should be excited to the best improvement of life, and shamed out of the waste of what is more worth than the world ; we should possess a firm satisfaction and unfailing joy amidst all the disappointments of life : because however we failed in less important pursuits, continual success would attend our labours for immortality, and we should close every Day with the warmest gratitude to God, the length of our days, who introducing us into life designed our everlasting happiness, and who by continuing our lives designs the *increase* of our blessedness and glory to eternity. These reflections have brought me insensibly to the

II^d Part of my design, to represent the *practical uses* we should make of our observations on the Daily instances of the divine Providence and Goodness, and this I shall do at large in the next Discourse.

^e 2 Cor. vii. 1.

^f 2 Peter, i. 11.

S E R M O N IV.

Of the chief Duties to which the instances of the divine Providence and Goodness every Evening gives us occasion to observe, oblige us.

PSALM xcii. 2.

— And thy faithfulness every Night.

IN discoursing on these words I have represented to you some of the principal instances of the Providence and Goodness of the Deity, which every Evening gives us occasion to observe, such as — the constant regular and useful succession of Night to Day — the continuance of our Health and Reason and active Powers throughout the Day — the common protection and supplies of the divine Providence — the occurrences of the Day which have manifested God's peculiar approbation of piety and virtue, or his displeasure against the contrary temper — any peculiar guidance, assistance, or success in affairs temporal or spiritual granted to ourselves—or any remarkable deliverances from evil—the wisdom and goodness of God visible in the afflictions and disappointments of the Day — and finally, the advantages

tages we have had for improving in piety and goodness, and thus living for immortality. It remains that,

II. I now distinctly represent the *practical uses* we should make of our daily experience and observation of the Providence and Goodness of God, or the duties to which they oblige us. I must omit several, because taken notice of in the first Discourse, and would recommend to your diligent cheerful practice the following.

1. By those daily instances of the divine Providence and Goodness we should be convinced of God's absolute property in us, and determined to devote ourselves to him, and *to glorify him with our bodies and with our spirits, which are his.*

What can found a right to love and obedience, if the favours of God to us are not allowed to be the firmest foundation? Who not only gave us Being and Life at first, but constantly preserves them. Who not only ^b *in the beginning* fitted up the world for our maintenance and delight; but continually actuates and preserves it, darts the Sun-beams, raises and again pours down the Vapours, maintains the right temperature of the Air, brings forth fruit out of the Earth, and by his unwearied energy produces all the beauty and good which the inanimate creation presents to us. Who by his constant influence preserves the health and vigour of our bodies, and the rational exercise of our mental powers, by his watchful Providence turns off the evils to which our frailty exposes us, is the remote author of all the good we reap from our own prudence or industry, or receive from the good qualities and kindness of others; and who continues all those blessings with us, that by a grateful sense and a right improvement of them we might be qualified to possess infinitely better blessings for ever.

If
^a 1 Cor. vi. 20. Psal. c. 2, 3. ^b Gen. i.

If we cannot exert a power which is not given and preserved to us by him, surely we ought to exert it agreeably to his will, and for his honour who is the God of our lives. If every good we enjoy be the gift of his bounty, surely we ought to observe his rules of temperance and charity in injoying it. And if God uphold us in life, that by gratitude and obedience to him during our state of probation we might be qualified for everlasting blessedness, surely we ought with the most zealous gratitude to devote ourselves to the obedience of his laws, and make it the great concern of life to please him, to discharge the duties which he hath assigned us while here, and prepare ourselves to injoy the felicity which he hath provided for us in heaven. Had God made us, and then abandoned the care of us, we might have questioned our obligations to love or obey him ; but when he not only introduced us into life in order to our being happy, but with a tender care and unwearied kindness pursues the design, and every Day gives us a thousand proofs of his good will, shall not we be without excuse ungrateful and guilty, if we neglect seriously to devote ourselves to his service, and to live accordingly ?

Let us therefore when we conclude a Day thus reflect. How many the blessings I have this Day injoyed, health, reason, friends, liberty, the beauties of the world about me, the conveniences of life, and security from its evils, advantages for the nobler satisfactions of goodness and devotion, and the hopes of immortality ! These are blessings with which the mercy of God hath filled another Day of my life, yea, thousands of my Days past ; and all this he has done in order to my being perfectly happy for millions of ages to come ! But what have my returns been this Day, and for many Days past ? Have I cherished a grateful sense of his benefits in Morning and Evening devotion ? Have I attended to the duties of the sta-

tion he allotted me, and discharged them, acting under the influence of justice, integrity, benevolence and charity to all around me? Have I considered seriously the value of that everlasting blessedness to which he invites me, and employed life in securing it, in wearing out those corrupt passions which would unfit me for a spiritual and divine happiness, and cultivating those dispositions that qualify for it? Or have I not lived forgetful of the God who is continually mindful of me for good, and negligent of those returns of gratitude of which I was capable? Notwithstanding these unworthy returns, his favours have filled another Day of my life, and shall I be longer ungrateful? "I cannot bear the thought of "being so——I will love the God whose goodness "to me is unwearied, to me less than the least of his "favours—I will employ the active powers which he "hath given me, and the blessings which he be- "stows, in acts of piety to God and beneficence to "men—From this time forth *I am the Lord's* in "purpose as well as by *right*; nor shall one Day "more filled with his benefits be filled with ingra- "titude and disobedience, or pass without some "proper testimonies of my intire devotednes to "him."

2. Does every Day furnish so many proofs of the constant Presence, and unwearied Care and Goodness of God? Let us live attentive to his *Presence*, *studious to please*, and *fearful to offend* him.

God is invisible to sense, and *second causes* conceal his action from our immediate view; yet our Reason and a reflection upon the experience of every Day discover him to us, and by serious meditation we should keep him in view. He who supports our life, and preserves our Reason and active Powers, must be *present*, and *know* in what manner we employ the Powers he preserves. He who constantly guides and moves inanimate matter in the production of plants

and trees, of grain and fruit, must be present throughout the world he thus actuates, and see how we employ the blessings his bounty continually bestows. And if he be thus present with us, and we owe him for every good, and depend absolutely upon him for time and for eternity, it is clear we ought to live attentive to his Presence ; by frequent consideration of the proofs of his Presence which every Day, every Hour, and every Injoyment gives, to refresh our sense of it : and to be above all things concerned to please him, and fearful to offend.

How great the guilt of continued ingratitude to that God *who gives us all things to injoy*, or of abusing his gifts by intemperance ; and shall we continue to be guilty of it under his eye, whose hand supplies the blessings we abuse, and who hath infinitely better blessings in store for those, who are thankful for his favours and improve them ? Are our rational and active powers continued to us by him, and shall we dare to employ them in acts of violence and injustice, disturbing the peace and happiness of his creation under his eye ; whose tender Providence and inexhaustible Bounty prove, how much he is delighted with the happiness of his creatures, and how much he must be displeased with those who are the authors of evil and wretchedness ? On the contrary, how chearfully should we practise instances of kindness, meekness, beneficence, and compassion, under the view of a God, who by his constant beneficence to us and to the world proves that these are greatly his delight ! What matter of joy is it that we may thus interest ourselves in his special favour, who hath all hearts in his hand, and all natural causes under his perpetual direction ; and what can be so much our concern as to be well with him ? Let us therefore with chearfulness and zeal discharge throughout the Day the various duties of life, animated by the hope

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of

of pleasing this infinitely great and good Being, whose Presence we *feel* in ourselves, and whose Influences we every where *discern* in the world around us ; and whose unwearied Patience with a guilty race, whose tender Providence and inexhaustible Bounty demonstrate, how much *they* are his delight, who promote his designs of the happiness of his creatures, and how largely he can reward *them* at last ; and will reward *them*, when they are qualified for the fulness of bliss.

3. Does every Day give numberless proofs of the watchful Providence and ever diffusive Bounty of God, and every Evening call us to observe and reflect upon them ? Let us close every Day with proper acknowledgments of these, in serious fervent *Prayers* and *Praises*.

If the Health and Reason we have another Day enjoyed have been preserved to *us* by God, if his Bounty hath ⁴ *spread our table* and *filled our cup*, if his hand unseen hath turned off from us numberless evils by which others have suffered, and he hath been graciously attentive to our temper and actions, that he might cherish in us a pious and virtuous disposition, the temper of heaven, and assist and succeed our endeavours after his favour and life eternal ; if this be the truth of our case every Day with regard to God, how reasonable is it, that we should every Night seriously reflect on these benefits, and devoutly celebrate them ; that we should in reverent and thankful addresses to God express and increase our gratitude for his benefits, and our concern to render unto him according to the greatness and number of them. Is not this the least we should do, to own every Day how much we are obliged ? When God is unwearied in conferring kindnesses, shall we grow weary of acknowledging them ? Do not they (I appeal to their experience) who neglect thus to own the goodness of God every Evening, live in an habitual forgetfulness

of

⁴ Psal. xxiii. 5.

of him, and shamefully insensible to the goodness which they continually experience! And can such persons as think it too much in so easy a manner to cherish and express their gratitude to God, think themselves properly qualified to enjoy the continuance of his present bounty, much more for his everlasting love, and for the bliss of heaven; a great part of which arises from contemplating the divine perfections and works, and from correspondent sentiments of veneration, gratitude, and love?

Again, have we acted another Day under the observation of God, the course of whose Providence shews him to be *a lover of righteousness, and an hater of iniquity*; and whose Perfections and whose Word assure us, that he observes our conduct in order to make proper and everlasting retributions, when our time of trial is ended; and does it not then become us at the close of every Day to consider how we have behaved under his view, what we have done to please him, and wherein we have offended? Should we not before we close our eyes in that sleep, which, for ought we know, may end in death, and conclude our state of trial, penitently implore his pardon of what we have done amiss, and his grace to cherish our resolutions of better obedience, accept our sincere endeavours to please him and perfect every good disposition in us; that so whether we awake in this world or in another, we may awake in his favour, to a piety and virtue of disposition that will never fail, and to a happiness that will continually increase and never have an end? If God preserves us while we are awake, must we not much more want his preserving care when we are utterly unable to take care of ourselves? And ought we not then to implore it with humility?

In short, what are Prayers and Praises concluding every Day, other than natural acknowledgements of

his mercies that have filled every Day, and of our needing the care of God every Night ? And what is the omission of this less than a practical denial, contrary to all reason, truth, and gratitude, that we have been the charge of his Providence and Bounty through the Day, and need his protection in the Night ? Let us therefore, as we would avoid the guilt of such ingratitude, live happy in the transporting emotions of a grateful heart towards the greatest of benefactors, in a cheerful confidence in God, a noble concern to be approved by him, and with hopes still brightening and enlarging from his unbounded munificence both for time and eternity ; as we would be qualified for his favour through life, and for the blessedness of knowing, praising, and loving him perfectly hereafter. Let us ** give thanks to the Lord, and sing praises to the name of the most high ; shew forth his loving kindness in the Morning, and his faithfulness every Night.* We find the pious king, amidst all the cares and business of a kingdom, found leisure for this work, and preferred the *pleasure* of it before every other pleasure ; and can we want leisure or time for it, if we do not want a heart ?

4. As God preserves us in life, that by improving it aright we may be qualified for immortal blessedness, we should *live for immortality.*

When God has not confined his goodness nor our hopes within the narrow bounds of this life, certainly we should not confine our concern within them. And if when his constant favours are greater than we deserve, he yet allows us to regard these only as introductory to incomparably more valuable enjoyments ; we should not by a contempt of them render ourselves unworthy of that happiness for which he graciously designs us. The exertion of the divine power, the attention of the divine wisdom, and the communications of the divine bounty which we enjoy, or are witnesses

** Psal. xcii. 1, 2. lxxxiv. 10.*

nesses to every Day, prove ; that no happiness is too great to be expected from these perfections, when the period is come in which God sees it fit to confer *complet* happiness. He has mercifully ^g *assured* us, this period is at no greater distance than the end of this short life ; and that by cherishing gratitude, subjection, and dependence towards himself, by acting with integrity, benevolence, and compassion to our fellow men, and by preserving our minds undebased by sensual indulgences, and undisturbed by violent and malicious passions ; and by cultivating a disposition for the pleasures of knowledge, devotion, goodness, virtue, and friendship, we shall be entitled to this happiness ; and according to our higher improvements in this divine temper enjoy it in a higher degree of perfection for ever. After this assurance, what can we see of real importance to ourselves, but to cultivate this temper and practise these virtues, and thus to be prepared for this happiness ? This is the ^h *great end* of the divine Providence and government with regard to man ; certainly therefore it should be the great object of our concern.

Shall we be satisfied, if a Day, improveable for securing life eternal, hath gone by us unimproved ? Shall God in vain exert his perfections as to us, in vain cause the Sun to rise and set, in vain continue the order of the world about us, in vain support the activity of our bodies and the rational powers of our minds ? No — when God is thus attentive to our happiness, our immortal happiness ; let us, ashamed of our past thoughtlessness, resolve to be more attentive. When God designs us for the joys of angels and of heaven ; let us be ashamed to design ourselves only for the pleasures of brutes, and of a few uncertain days. How great the goodness of God in continuing our opportunity for the heavenly blessedness ! The most

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pleasing

^g Matt. v. 3—12. x. 41, 42. Luke xix. 15.

^h Matt. xxviii. 18.—Rom. viii. 28. 1 Cor. iii. 21.—

pleasing return we can make him is to comply with his design, and to be happy for ever. Let us therefore every evening count we have lived the Day past no further, than we have lived, for heaven ; and begin every Morning with serious and vigorous resolutions of improving our interest in that blessedness, to light us on our way to which the Sun continues to shine, and to inable us to pursue which God. continues our lives and moral powers.

5. With what secure and pleasing confidence may the pious and good close the Day in *sleep*, or life in *death* ; persuaded that this God, who with such ex- pence of power, wisdom, and benevolence, provides for them suitably to a state of trial, will make them happy in futurity, compleatly blessed in eternity.

When we yield to sleep we are for a time divested of all ability to take care of ourselves, and submit to a temporary cessation of our rational and active powers. Innumerable are the evils which continually surprize some or other of the sons of men while awake, in spite of all their strength, prudence, and caution. Who then shall answer for our safety while we sleep ? Or who assure us of the return of our Reason and activity after sleep has for hours suspended them ? To these questions the pious and good are inabled, from the experience of the Day, to give a satisfactory answer ; and they only. They know that to the continual exertion of the divine wisdom and power they have been indebted for the life and health of the Day ; that the regular exercise of their intellectual powers, and the healthful flow of their blood and spirits, depend on the constant influence and direction of God ; and that what they contribute to their own support in the Day is a trifle, in comparison to what they owe to the care and kindness of God. They can therefore with a chearful confidence trust the whole of their security to the divine Providence during sleep, to which they have been indebted for much the

greatest part of the blessings and safety of the Day ; and sleep in peace, ¹ *when he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.* They may chearfully expect from God, to be restored with fresh spirit and vigour to the exercise of their rational and active powers in the Morning, after this short suspension ; when they have experienced his ever attentive wisdom, his un-wearied power and goodness thro' the Day, darting the Sun-beams, animating the whole creation, and maintaining them in reason and health : tho' the exact direction of ten thousand fine springs and various intricate movements was necessary for this end.

Further, as sleep is the most natural image of death, and as we must all after a little time sleep to awake no more in this world ; and the soul soon quit the body by which it has so long acted, and injoyed pleasure, and the world, which hath ministered to it such a variety of delights ; and as the conclusion of every Day naturally leads the thoughtful to the consideration of that Day, which must be his last here ; so his reflections on the divine favours, which have filled another and many past Days of his life, unable him to think, with a pleasing and firm assurance, of entering the new state, under the care of the same God, who hath preserved and provided for him during this.

The bounty of God in supplying every blessing proper for a state of trial assures him, that as God hath given him nobler capacities for happiness than can be filled here, he designed they should be filled in some other state ; and that he will himself fill them, when an approved piety and obedience have qualified him for his final reward and for perfect happiness. He reflects that to raise and preserve an immortal body, and raise the human soul to its proper perfection, can not require more attention, skill, and power, than God now exerts in

¹ Psal. cxxi. 4.

in preserving this animal body, and a rational mind in union with it ; and that with no greater expence of power and wisdom, than that by which God now preserves this world, fit to support and delight us, he can form or keep in order a world fitted for perfect happiness : that with the same ease, he now makes the body convey so much knowledge, and minister so many pleasures to the mind, he can without the mediation of a gross animal body, or by a more refined body, convey a more clear and extensive knowledge, and far more excellent pleasures to the soul. Firmly confiding therefore in these perfections, which he has already experienced exerting themselves in his preservation and supply thro' life, he thinks with a pleasing impatience of entering another state under the care of his heavenly Father, and doubts not of injoying in it a felicity correspondent to the improvements he has made in piety and goodness, to his large capacities of happiness, and to what he has already seen and experienced of the inexhaustible bounty and unwearied attention of the Deity for his happiness, and that of the rest of mankind through this life.

The God, who by the gross organs of the animal body, gives him to injoy in some degree the pleasures of discerning and contemplating the divine perfections, and the grandeur and beauty of the divine works, and of correspondent affections to the greatest and best of beings ; and who amidst the numerous wants, selfish inclinations, and divided interests of this animal body, inables him to injoy in a good degree the satisfactions of an extensive benevolence and a generous friendship ; he can certainly with equal ease give him to injoy these pleasures in a far greater perfection in the world of purity and immortality. And as all his dispensations prove the perfection and happiness of his creatures to be the great aim and delight of God ; with a chearful assurance he expects to injoy

injoy this perfection of happiness in the next state. Especially since besides his present experience of the divine benevolence, he hath the express promises of his Gospel, ^k *which hath brought life and immortality to light.*

Let such therefore tremble to enter another state, wherein no good can be hoped for but from God, who have never been sensible of his goodness to them in the present state, nor studied to answer it. He who hath considered and acknowledged God as the author of all the good he hath injoyed here, as his ^l *sun and shield,* his guide and friend through life, can with joy enter another state under his conduct; assured that he who hath been the guide of his mortal life, will be his support in death, and his *portion for ever;* and that he whose faithfulness every Day witnesseth, and who hath made good to him the promises of his Word in regard to the present life, will abundantly make good the more glorious promises which his Gospel contains, and which the ^m resurrection of his Son hath confirmed, of compleat and everlasting happiness: *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for the pious and good in his heavenly kingdom.*

Having brought the pious person to this glorious end of his faith and hope, I will here conclude the account of the great duties to which our daily experience of the goodness and faithfulness of God obliges us, and to the practice of which serious reflections on it every Evening would strongly excite us; and dismiss the subject after drawing two inferences from it.

1. From what has been offered to your thoughts on this and the former subject you may learn, how friendly and subservient *Reason* and true *Philosophy* are to Religion and to divine Revelation.

Revelation ascribes all good to God, asserts that ⁿ *every good and perfect gift is from him;* that it is he
who

^k 2 Tim. i. 10. ^l Psal. lxxxiv. 11. lxxiii. 23.

^m 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. ⁿ James i. 17. Matt. v. 45. Psal. civ. 14,
27. Dan. v. 23. Matt. vi. 11, 25. Psal. lxv. 8.

who maketh his Sun to rise, and sendeth rain, and bringeth forth food out of the earth ; that in his hand is our breath, and that his are all our ways ; that it is God who giveth us our daily bread, keeps us during the Night ; and maketh the out-goings of the Morning and Evening to rejoice. Reason also, and Philosophy, which is Reason cultivated and employed in studying the works of God, abundantly confirm these same truths. Reason employed in studying the frame of the human soul and body assures us, that as nothing less than the wisdom and power of God could form these curious and wonderful productions at first, so these perfections alone can continue the right order of both. Reason employed in studying the frame of our world discovers ten thousand instances of the all-comprehensive wisdom and almighty power of its Maker, and clearly discerns ; that as these perfections were necessary to raise the mighty building at first, so they are necessary to move the senseless unactive matter which compose it, with all the swiftness and regularity proper to continue the beauty and order of the creation. As the Author of Nature and of Revelation is one and the same *Being*, his discoveries of himself by the light of *Reason*, by his *Works*, and by his *Word*, must be perfectly consistent with each other, and communicate mutually light and beauty.

Instead therefore of being afraid to use your *Reason* in Religion, be persuaded diligently to employ it on religious truths. *Reason* is an enemy to *Superstition*, to *Enthusiasm*, to foolish and wicked notions and practices blasphemously called Religion, but it is the best friend to true Religion ; and the more rational you are, the more pious you will be, for nothing is so rational as habitual piety. The more you study and understand the works of God, the more confirmed you will be in the belief of what the Scriptures declare of his infinite perfections, his constant universal Providence, and his inexhaustible bounty. And the

the more distinctly you discern these perfections exerting themselves in this world for the happiness of his creatures, the more readily you will believe and the more firmly depend upon the great things which his Gospel promises to the pious and good in a better world. Leaving therefore an *irrational* Faith and Religion to children and fools, let yours be *manly* and *reasonable*, some way worthy of the God who is the object of it ; and such as makes you ^o *like unto him* in an unbounded benevolence, an invariable righteousness, and an ever diffusive bounty and charity.

2. From hence we may learn the usefulness of *Retirement* and *Meditation*, and should be persuaded to practise them.

Tho' God makes innumerable discoveries of his Providence and Goodness every Day, yet only the serious and devout, who attend to these and meditate upon them, are happy in distinct apprehensions of the Deity and of his Presence, in exalted sentiments of admiration and love, in a warm gratitude to infinite benevolence and a cheerful trust in it. The generality, engaged by the cares and pleasures of the bodily life, look no further than what immediately affects their senses agreeably or disagreeably, at most look no further than *second causes* ; and seldom, if ever, trace up the streams of good continually flowing to their inexhaustible fountain, seldom rise from beholding the beauties of the Creation to the admiration and love of the Creator and Preserver. Tho' curious to know the Cause of any trifling if uncommon event, they are never seriously inquisitive after the mighty Cause, which continues the rising and setting of the Sun, the regular course of the Moon, the succession of the Seasons, and of Day and Night ; the mighty Cause which ^p *gives Rain from heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling mankind with food and gladness.*

This

• Eph. v. 1, 2. 1 Cor. xiv. 20. ^p Acts xiv. 17.

This temper is not more *ungrateful* than it is *mean* and *stupid*; it is to live in the world like *beasts*, not like *men*; gratifying our senses and appetites with the good things which the divine bounty supplies, without ever considering, or strongly apprehending and owning, our obligations to the all-bounteous Giver. Were you like the *horse* or the *ox* incapable of this elevation of mind, it were a good excuse; but to be distinguished from them by reasonable powers, which qualify you to ¹ *seek after God and find him*, and yet not to employ these noble powers herein, when also *he is* not far from any of you, but if you sought him you would easily find him, this is inexcusably guilty and foolish; it is, according to the ² *Prophet*, being more foolish than the *ox who knows his owner*, if we do not *consider the works of the Lord*, and know God our Maker.

Be persuaded then not to live in a thoughtless round of mean cares, trifling amusements, and brutal indulgences, estranged from God, and from the pleasures of devotion; but accustom yourselves every Evening to retire from the world of the covetous and sensual, and to consider the world as the work of God, upheld by his Providence, and governed by his Wisdom. Consider the *good things* of the Day, not merely as *suited* to your wants and desires, or the reward of your industry, but as the *gifts* of God, and proofs of his almighty Providence, and unwearied Kindness. Look on the *evils* of the Day not merely as disagreeable occurrences, against which you are concerned to guard yourselves for the future; but as a discipline designed by God to make you *confide*-*rate*, *wise*, and *good*, and to turn your hearts more intirely to the unmixed unembittered happiness of immortality.

The mind accustomed in daily devout retirement to view the dispensations of divine Providence through the

the Day, in the light and connection wherein they have been now represented, will possess the noblest satisfactions in venerating and loving unbounded goodness, and almighty wisdom, ever incompassing him, in a firm reliance on these perfections, and in the largest and best founded expectations from them for all future time, and a following eternity ; will be animated in the practice of whatever is good, mightily cheered under all the evils of life, and qualified whenever his heavenly Father shall call him, to enter that state : where he shall *see God face to face*, and enjoy a happiness equal to the largest promises of a faithful God, and infinitely above the largest hopes and conceptions we can at present form concerning it.

May God make what has been now offered to our thoughts greatly instrumental to form us to this temper, and prepare us for this happiness. Amen.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

FORMS



FORMS OF PRAYER FOR THE MORNING AND EVENING.

A PRAYER for a FAMILY on a LORD's- DAY MORNING.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting Jehovah ! We acknowledge and adore thee as the Creator and preserver of the universe, and of all the infinite varieties of Beings, which inhabit it. The day is thine, the night also is thine, for thou hast prepared the light and the sun ; and under thy direction the sun continues to rise and shine : and by thine unceasing influences the beauty and usefulness of the world are maintained.

As thou art the God of our lives, and of all our time, thou justly claimest to be more especially honoured with a portion of it ; and hast appointed one day in seven to be sacred, to the contemplation and praise of thine unbounded wisdom, power, and benevolence, as Creator and preserver of all things ; to devout meditations on thy glorious works, and acknowledgments of thine inexhaustible bounty. For thou producest continually herbs and grass for cattle, plants and grain and fruits for men ; and satisfiest the desires of every living thing. How condescending thy kindness, how immense thy bounty !

Thou

Thou hast also, most merciful God, caused the sun of righteousness to arise upon mankind, with salvation in his beams ; and cleared our part of the world from that thick darkness of ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, which still covers many nations. Thy gospel hath early taught us to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. Thy free goodness made us for immortality, and soon as we began to live the life of reason, thy gospel raised our views to an eternal Heaven of divine pleasures as our home ; and directed our feet into the paths of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, as certainly terminating in everlasting blessedness.

How often have we wandered from these paths, and yet thy grace in Christ Jesus invites us to return to them, by strong assurances of thy pardoning mercy. And to excite us to strive resolutely against evil inclinations, habits, and examples, and to cultivate a divine temper, thy Son assures us that thou wilt give thy holy spirit unto them who ask him. And to animate us, against a consciousness of many sins and imperfections, unto a patient continuance in well-doing, thy gospel assures to the faithful glory, honour, and immortality. And that thou wilt finally reward us, not according to the shortness and defection of our obedience, but according to thine abounding grace in Christ Jesus, with a blessedness great as his condescension and friendship, certain as his resurrection from the dead, and lasting as eternity.

Gracious God, how reasonable the command to keep holy this day ! And that with readiness and attention we should ingage in those celebrations of thy perfections and benefits, in that study of thy will, and in those meditations on eternity, which may manifest a suitable gratitude for thy great favours, attemper our souls to the employments and pleasures of heaven ; and determine us constantly to live as heirs of immortality. With pleasure we comply with this kind appointment. We rejoice that we are sent into the world,

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and preserved in life, not merely that we may labour for a present subsistence, or pursue the mean indulgences of appetite and inclination, and the interests of our dying bodies ; but that under the influences of thy word and spirit we may be trained for the joys of angels and heaven.

We praise thee, merciful God, for the return of a day sacred to the promoting this great design ; and that we see it with abilities of body and mind for discharging the duties, and enjoying the satisfactions of devotion. That although we have so often slighted thine offered favour, and heaven, the gracious offer is renewed ; and that after trifling away so many advantages for acquainting ourselves with God, for obtaining or improving an interest in thy favour ; advantages for this are renewed, and we are yet in the way of life and salvation.

Forgive us, gracious God, that we could have lived so insensible of our great obligations, and so regardless of eternity. Forgive us if we have lived to this day without a serious and effectual concern to approve ourselves to an ever-present God, and to become happy in a certain, an approaching eternity ; when compared with the value of eternal blessedness the whole world is evidently a trifle : and in comparison of its duration a thousand ages are but as a day. Forgive us, heavenly Father, that our application at best to the improvement of our minds in the knowledge of thee and thy Son Jesus Christ, and our proficience in the graces and virtues of the christian temper, have been in no more proportion to the aids and encouragements of the gospel.

We have been plainly taught our obligations to our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, altho' we have so little considered these, and behaved so unworthy of them. We were capable of knowing the value of everlasting salvation ; tho' we have often sacrificed our interest in it to trifling amusements, and sensual

sensual pursuits and indulgences. We have been instructed in the excellence and obligation of piety and virtue, tho' we have neglected these ; even when excited to apply ourselves to acquire and improve in them, by the promise of glory, honour, and immortality. Enter not into judgment with thy servants, O Lord, our own hearts condemn us ; how much more mightest thou, who art greater than our hearts, and who knowest all things.

We repent of our past negligence and disobedience, and plead the promises of pardon, which the Father of mercies has made to the penitent thro' Jesus Christ. We would more diligently work out our salvation ; do thou work in us to will and to do. May we not lose the present season of grace, but do thou make us wise, in this our day, to mind the things which regard our everlasting welfare ; since we know not, but before another Lord's day, they may be for ever hidden from our eyes ; and full of gratitude to the best of beings, that we may yet devote ourselves to thee with the hope of being accepted ; and strive for a divine disposition with the hope of attaining it by thy gracious assistance : may we devote ourselves to thee immediately and intirely.

While we apply ourselves to the best dischargete of the duties before us, may we be assisted and succeeded by the all-gracious Father of spirits. May retired meditation and devotion prepare us for a spiritual performance of publick worship, before a God who seeth the heart. May a deep veneration of thy glorious perfections fill our souls, when we are called to adore them in prayer. And by our repeated adorations may we be formed to an habitual reverence of an infinitely perfect and always present God, and prepared for joining in the worship of heaven.

And O most holy God, grant that our confessions of sin may excite in us an ingenuous sorrow, and effectual purposes of reforming what we own is faulty,

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that we may be qualified for pardon thro' Jesus Christ. Teach us also, heavenly Father, to ask the best blessings with faith, humility, and fervour ; and may our prayers animate our endeavours, to acquire all those good dispositions, which we desire thee to form in us : and do thou bless us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. May our supplications for others cherish in us a generous good will, and prompt us to promote the common good : and be graciously heard by thee our common father. May our hearts be warmed by the review and celebration of thy numberless benefits, and especially when we praise thy goodness, which made us for immortal blessedness, which spared not the life of thine own Son, but gave him to death for a world of sinners ; that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but obtain eternal life : and which still pursues the design, superior even to our ungrateful opposition.

Fill our hearts with gratitude, O thou best of Beings, while thy praises employ our tongues, and may a grateful temper be confirmed, that we may become meet for the world where gratitude, praise and happiness are in eternal perfection. Dispose us, righteous Lord, to attend the instructions of thy word, with a full conviction of thine authority, and of the reasonableness and kind intention of all thy laws ; with an earnest desire to know thy whole will, and a fixed resolution to perform it : as we hope to receive the crown of life, promised to a faithful and persevering obedience. And do thou accompany thy word with thy power, that it may convince us of sin, determine us to our duty, and guide us to life everlasting.

And, O thou great lover of souls, succeed this day in all thy churches the ministrations of thy Gospel ; that sinners may every where be rouzed by strong convictions of the guilt and danger of a sinful life, to inquire with deep concern what they must do to be saved ; and immediately flee from the wrath to come,

and lay hold on eternal life. By attending these may thy servants also receive assistance and encouragement in the way of salvation, and be advanced to continual improvements in virtue and piety, and thus qualified for higher degrees of blessedness in eternity.

Grant, merciful God, unto all who are dear to us the blessings of that covenant, which is well ordered in all things and sure. May they prosper and be in health; but above all things may their souls prosper. May we and they be under the conduct of thy providence and spirit thro' the whole of this day; be guarded from every evil, and especially from, what we ought to dread as the greatest, wilfully offending thee, when we profess to worship thee.

Supply us, bountiful Father, this day with food convenient, and inspirit and strengthen us for the discharge of every duty, publick or private; that in the close of the day we may reflect on our temper and conduct with a rational assurance of thine acceptance, and of being advanced in our preparation for the blessedness of eternity: as we are certainly drawing nearer to the conclusion of this mortal life. And O that every day spent in thine earthly courts might render us more fit to dwell for ever in thy heavenly kingdom, and to become fully blessed in thy likeness, love, and enjoyment for ever.

All this we humbly beg, O most merciful Father, for thy goodness sake, and in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour; who was delivered to death for our offences, and raised again for our justification: unto him be salvation, praise, and obedience, to the glory of God his Father, now and for ever. Amen.

*A PRAYER for a FAMILY on a
LORD'S-DAY EVENING.*

MOST gracious God ! eternal source of being, and Father of spirits ! Of thy free goodness thou didst make man for immortality, and send us into this world; that acquainting ourselves with thee, and establishing the love of God and of goodness, amidst the distractions and temptations of the present state ; we might be found meet when we leave it to rise to a nobler state of existence ; and to be blessed in the perfection of knowledge, rectitude, goodness, and devotion for ever. We bless thee that thou hast endowed us with this excellence of nature, and hast made this short life improveable to such immense advantage,

We praise thee also, thou God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for those abundant assistances, which thou hast given us by thy gospel ; not only for attaining this great end of our being ; but for making such advances in piety and virtue, as will qualify us for exalted degrees of perfection and felicity in a future state.

In how clear a light hast thou set before us an immortality of perfection and happiness ; and how fully assured us of obtaining it, by our imitating the virtues and obeying the gospel of thy son ! Thou, Almighty Father, didst not only empower him to confirm the desirable promise by numerous miracles, and even by raising the dead to life ; but didst appoint him also to seal it with his testimony in death ; and

and having been an example of the temper and life which he required, as our preparation for heaven, thou didst make him also an example of the greatness and certainty of the promised reward : conducting him thro' death by a glorious resurrection and a visible reception into heaven, to possess the felicity which he promised to his followers.

Father of lights! how plain are his directions, how reasonable his commands, the observance of which not only makes Christians happy in themselves, and extensively beneficial to others ; but forms in them the temper of heaven. And how encouraging his assurances of full forgiveness and acceptance, even to those who have abused this rich grace, if they truly repent and amend their ways ; and of their being assisted in proportion to their weakness, and to the difficulties which they find in their way to an established holiness and piety.

Forgive us, O Father of mercies, that we could have received such grace in vain, and have so often opposed the infinitely important design of it ; that we might more freely gratify our animal appetites and passions, and serve the interests of our dying bodies. Forgive them, most merciful God, if any present have never heartily complied with it. May we trifle no longer, but immediately resolve and perform it ; and put ourselves into the way to heaven and happiness everlasting. Forgive us that at the best we have made no greater proficience in the christian temper, that we are not more habitually devout, more cheerfully and actively beneficent, more moderate in our desires and pursuits of sensible things, and more constantly attentive to the concerns of immortality. Forgive us, gracious God ; for we resolve indeed to comply with the terms of pardon established in thy covenant of grace. We will not only profess faith in thy Son, and call him Lord, Lord, but be heartily devoted and obedient to him. We would not merely

lament what we have done amiss, but continually reform it ; and, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, strive to perfect holiness in thy fear ; and in the hope of rising to thy heaven of consummate purity, devotion, and felicity.

Praised be thy wisdom and goodness, that to preserve on our minds a lively conviction of God and of eternity, thou hast made the Lord's-day sacred to those religious meditations and exercises, which are fitted to confirm our faith, raise our love, increase a knowledge of our duty and disposition to practise it ; and to give us the noble satisfactions arising from employing the best affections of the human mind on the most excellent of beings, and rejoicing in his favour, and in hopes still brightening and enlarging of a felicity divine and eternal. Blessed be God for the advantages of this kind, with which we have been this day favoured. Graciously accept and succeed our sincere desires and endeavours to honour thee, and to promote our own improvement in a pious and heavenly disposition ; and mercifully forgive the many defects attending our religious services ; the distraction of our thoughts, the coldness of our affections, and the inconstancy of our concern to approve ourselves to thee, and to advance in piety. Thou knowest the human frame, and rememberest that we are dust ; and thou wilt not despise sincerity, altho' when the spirit is willing, the flesh be weak. And so condescending is thy kindness as to allow the hope, that by our imperfect essays of love and devotion, we shall be gradually trained for thy glorious presence, and for the consummate love and adoration of the heavenly state.

Bless, gracious God, the institutions of thy gospel, and the ministrations of thy word, and make them abundantly successful this day in all thy churches ; for the conversion of sinners, and for building up thy servants in knowledge, holiness, and comfort

unto

unto eternal life. May these effects be produced especially on all our relations and friends ; for whose present and everlasting happiness we would always be greatly concerned.

Be pleased also, O God of unwearied kindness and inexhaustible bounty, to receive our grateful confessions of the care and supplies of thy providence, which we have this day experienced ; and our praises, that we have been favoured with all things necessary for life and godliness ; and that we close the day amidst so many blessings. Secure us and our habitations this night from every hurtful accident, O thou watchful guardian of Israel ; and make our sleep refreshing. Grant us to see another day, rejoicing in thy goodness, and imprest with a sense of the value of life, as it is connected with eternity, and improvable for securing an eternity of blessedness. May we begin it with serious and vigorous resolutions of living for immortality, to which every day brings us nearer. And may every day, which thy mercy shall add to our lives, be so improved as to raise us higher in perfection and felicity for ever.

These large requests, O thou best of beings, we present, humbly trusting in thy goodness, thro' the mediation of thy Son Jesus Christ our generous Redeemer.

Now unto him who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb ; unto God even the Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and died to wash us from our sins in his own blood, and to make us kings and priests unto God for ever and ever : be glory, salvation, obedience and praise everlasting. Amen.



A MORNING PRAYER for a
FAMILY.

ALMIGHTY, most wise and benevolent Lord! Thou art the infinite original of being, life and good, to innumerable worlds and creatures. The Heavens are thine, and all their hosts, for thou hast created them; and all the hosts of heaven worship thee. This earth is thine, and the fulness of it, the world and all they who dwell therein; for thou hast founded it upon the seas, and established it on the floods; and hast created mankind upon it, and other living creatures without number, to enjoy thy various bounties, and rejoice in thine inexhaustible goodness; and thou preservest them all. How many the proofs which every morning presents us, heavenly Father, of thy constant presence, thine ever-attentive providence, and thine unwearied kindness! With the return of every morning therefore would we thy rational offspring raise our souls, in sentiments of veneration, gratitude and love, to that great being, who formed the vast body of the sun, laid up in it those immeasurable stores of light and heat, which for thousands of years have supplied various worlds, and innumerable creatures; and who still with an unfailing bounty distributes them.

To thine ever-attentive benevolence, heavenly Father, we must also ascribe the renewal of our rational and active powers, after they had been suspended in sleep; and we would heartily praise thee; that thou graciously restorest our capacity for rational actions and enjoyments, for working out our eternal salvation,

tion, and preparing ourselves to be blessed for ever. How great this goodness to creatures, who have wasted life, been negligent of the chief end of their being and who are still disposed to trifle. How many, great, and undeserved the blessings, in the possession of which we appear before thee this morning ! Health, reason, friends, the conveniences of life, the light and grace and encouragements of the gospel ; and a liberty of addressing thee thro' the meditation of thy well beloved Son, for those aids, which will enable us to improve all for our proficience and establishment in piety and virtue, and for our final perfection and everlasting felicity. Gracious God, to these favours add this, of exciting within us a more warm and abiding sense of our obligations, and concern to answer them.

Forgive us, merciful Father, our past wanderings from the paths of duty and of happiness. We would now seriously and cheerfully devote ourselves to the love and obedience of thee, the best of beings ; and to a diligent preparation for that heaven of divine and everlasting blessedness, to which thy mercy in Christ Jesus still invites us. While others follow the dictates of sense and passion, of custom and example ; help us to regard and study the gospel of the blessed Jesus, as the rule of our temper and conduct, and constantly to conform to its precepts ; as we would be interested in the never ending blessedness, which it assures to the obedient. Denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, may we live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of thee the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ. And O thou God of all grace, unable us not only to persevere in the christian faith and practice ; but continually to improve. May daily meditations on the evidences of thy perfections and providence ; and daily recollections and acknowledgments

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ledgments of thy numerous benefits, render our piety more rational, fervent, and uniform. May our benevolence become continually more warm, active, and prevailing ; and our command over our passions more easy and intire. May we be more ready to every good work, and more abundant in it. As frail offending creatures, whose best obedience is very defective, may we ever be humble before thee, and modest and candid in our censures of our fellow creatures. And as beings hastening into eternity, may we become every day more disengaged from the interests and pleasures of a world we are leaving ; and more intent on a state of everlasting perfection and felicity, to which we are continually approaching.

And O thou all-wise and all-gracious disposer of us and of all things, while we continue in the way of our duty, do thou make us thy care. Guard us this day from every real evil. Thou alone knowest what upon the whole is good or evil for man ; and in thy hand our breath and life are, and under thy direction are all our ways. Grant us, heavenly Father, the good things of life, which thou seest proper for us ; and teach us to raise the enjoyment of them, by mingling with it the noble satisfactions, which arise from gratitude and hope in thee the giver of all, from doing good to others, and from the prospects of immortality. Teach us also, in whatever state we are, to be therewith content. May we know how to be afflicted, as well as to rejoice. And in every circumstance of life may we honour thee by an easy resignation, by a faithful discharge of our duty, and by cheerful regards to that everlasting state ; in comparison of which, all the joys and sorrows of the present are light and momentary. And do thou, the God of all wisdom and grace, guide us by thy counsel, until thou hast brought us to thine everlasting kingdom and glory.

We

We would, heavenly Father, commend to thy peculiar favour and blessing all our relations and friends. May they all be thine by a serious and hearty dedication of themselves to thee in the christian covenant, and by persevering in that course of piety and virtue, which can alone secure to them thy favour, and lead them to the best enjoyments of this life, and to an eternity of blessedness. And may we all meet in heaven, and rejoice together in thy glorious presence, full approbation, and everlasting love.

We ask all for thy goodness sake in Christ Jesus, in whose words we sum up our imperfect requests unto thee our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. May thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but so as to deliver us from the evil : for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever ! Amen.


*An EVENING PRAYER for a
FAMILY.*

ETERNAL, almighty, all-wise, and most gracious God ! The heavens declare thy glory, and the firmament sheweth forth thy handy work. Day unto day utterereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge of the boundless wisdom, power, and benevolence of the creator and preserver of all things. When we consider thy heavens, the productions of thy power, and the moon and stars, which thy wisdom hath ordained ; Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, what are we the sinful children of men, that thou shouldest daily visit us with innumerable instances of thy tender care, and inexhaustible bounty ! We are lost in the immensity of thy works, and are as nothing when compared with the rest of thy creation ; yet thou cloallest with verdure the grafts of our meadows, coverest our fields with corn, feedest the birds of the air, and numberest even the hairs of thy servants heads, and givest food to all flesh !

We would not, gracious God, live in thy world, surrounded with the displays of thy perfections, upheld by thy hand, and continually enjoying thy bounties ; and live insensible to the presence and benevolence of our supremem and constant benefactor. With pleasure we would employ the rational powers and affections which thou hast given us in their best exercises, the contemplation, veneration and love of an ever present, and infinitely beneficent God and Father ; and close with thy praises every day, filled with thy benefits.

Adored

Adored be the Lord of the universe, who condescends continually to take care of a world of creatures infinitely beneath him ; of creatures for the most part incapable of apprehending their obligations to their great benefactor ; or, if capable of it, too generally forgetful of the God, who made and preserves them ; who causes his sun to arise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust. Who opening his hand satisfieth the desires of every living thing ; and who hath this day supported in life the countless millions of mankind, and been attentive to train them for immortality.

How great our obligations to this goodness, for the continuance of health and reason another day ! 'Tis thy constant direction, heavenly Father, which continues our blood in its regular and vital course, and preserves the order of our mental powers ; and shouldst thou but one moment suspend thine influence, we must sink into the dust. Praised be his bounty, who hath spread our table, and filled our cup, and given us all things to enjoy ; who hath caused the earth to yield all the good things we derive from it, and who placed and preserves us in circumstances favourable for our obtaining and enjoying them. And who when we are unworthy of these instances of his kind regard, grants them as accommodations on our way to a better world, and incitements to that grateful piety and generous beneficence which will prepare us for the far better blessings of the heavenly and everlasting state. Praised be his grace who hath been observant of our temper and conduct another day, and waited to cherish in us every virtuous disposition, to animate every holy purpose, to turn aside dangerous temptations, or strengthen us to overcome them ; and who disposes the various events of our lives, so that they shall conspire to promote our greatest improvement in piety and virtue, and our highest happiness in eternity : if

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we love him, and comply with his kind intentions. Praised also be his goodness, who having guarded us from every evil thro' the day, grants us to close it in peace.

Forgive us, heavenly Father, that we are not more grateful for thy continued benefits, and more chearfully and constantly concerned to approve ourselves unto thee, in the best discharge of the duties of our several relations, and in the best improvement of our opportunities for doing good. Forgive us, that we are not more seriously attentive to correct the remaining irregularities of our passions, and to perfect holiness in thy fear, and in the hope of heaven. With thee there is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared; and thou hast advanced thy Son to thy right hand, that he may be a Prince and a Saviour; thro' whom repentance shall obtain the full remission of sins. May an ingenuous repentance, may an hearty and successful concern to reform what hath been amiss, and to supply what hath been wanting, qualify us for thy pardoning mercy; and give us the joys of a good conscience, and a rational hope of thine acceptance. Laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset us, may we run with patience the race set before us; looking unto Jesus, the prescriber and rewarder of a life of faith; who for the joy set before him endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high. And as we would be with him, behold his glory, triumph in his praises, and partake in his blessedness for ever; may the same mind be in us, and may we walk as he walked. May we cultivate a devotion like his, rational, fervent, and constant, and a benevolence warm, active and unbounded, always overcoming evil with good. May our integrity be superior to the strongest temptations of the world; and our moderation to things present and sensible, such, as becomes strangers on earth

earth and citizens of heaven. May we, regarding his perfect example, be excited to continual improvement in a christian and divine temper, that becoming meet for the employments and blessedness of the heavenly paradise, our spirits may be received into it, when we leave this world: and when Christ shall appear, may appear with him in glory.

We would humbly intercede with thee the Father of mankind for all our fellow-creatures, that thou wouldst cause the light of the glorious gospel to shine into all their hearts; that they may all know thee as the only true God, and Jesus Christ as sent by thee, to guide them to life eternal. Put a final period to the reign of idolatry, superstition, imposture, persecution, and tyranny in thy world; and may religious and civil liberty, as they are the rights, at length become the blessings and possessions of all mankind. Continue these inestimable blessings to Great Britain and Ireland, and to our colonies; may we be more thankful for them, and better improve them. Bless our Sovereign King George, guide his counsels, and succeed his administrations; that they may ever terminate in the publick good. Bless the whole royal family with every great and good quality, and may they be examples of virtue and piety, guardians of liberty, and blessings to mankind. In thy hand, O God, are the hearts of all; make, we pray thee, all who are round the throne wise and faithful; counsel our counsellors, and teach our senators wisdom, integrity, and a prevailing love to their country. Assist, bless, and succeed all the ministers of thine everlasting gospel; that thro' their preaching many may believe, repent, and be saved. May all the afflicted find thee a God of mercy and consolation, when they call upon thee; do thou graciously support, relieve, and deliver them; and may they glorify thee.

May all our relations and friends be heartily devoted to the love and obedience of thee the best of

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beings, and of parents ; and wisely seek happiness in a conformity to the instructions, and an imitation of the virtues of Jesus thy beloved Son, and thus interest themselves in thy special guidance, protection, and supplies for this life, and be made meet for the glorious and everlasting inheritance of the saints in light.

Take them and us, heavenly Father, under thy protection for the following night. Watch over us while we sleep, thou great guardian of Israel, who never sleepest. Make our slumbers refreshing, and our awaking cheerful. May we begin another day with a just conviction of the worth of life in its connection with eternity, and in a proper disposition for the best improvement of it. And may every day of life, in which thy mercy shall indulge us, be wisely and piously employed, and thus raise us higher in thy favour and in blessedness for eternity. We ask all, humbly trusting in thy paternal goodness, and in the mediation of thy Son ; thro' whom we ascribe unto thee the greatest and best of beings, the only wise, the always present, and everlasting Jehovah, the kingdom, power, and glory, for ever. Amen.

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